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THE BREAKING OF THE STORM


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THE

BREAKING OF THE STORM.

BY

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Translated from the German

BY

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



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THE BREAKING OF THE STORM.

BOOK V.—*Continued.*

CHAPTER II.

FRAU FELDNER, Valerie's old lady's-maid, told Elsa that her lady was in a sound sleep, as was always the case with her after a violent attack of headache, and out of which she would hardly awake before evening. Elsa, who had herself suffered from the extraordinary sultriness of the day, and from the uncomfortable conversation at dinner, and was also put out and agitated by the scene with the Count, intended to employ the time in taking a walk; and thinking that Carla and the Count were already gone, was going, out of courtesy, to

invite Frau von Wallbach to accompany her. Hat and shawl in hand, she was coming out of the Baroness's rooms, and innocently lifting the portière of the anteroom, had become a very unwilling spectator of the little scene which took place between the Count and Carla. In her consternation she had let the curtain fall again, and without even thinking whether she had been observed or not, had hastily run downstairs, and now wandered round the garden trying to persuade herself that what she had seen was a mistake—her eyes had deceived her. It was not possible that Carla could have so far forgotten herself, that she could so shamefully deceive her brother. But the more determinately she tried to drive back and destroy the hateful picture, the more terribly distinctly it stood out in her mind.

It must be so! The link that should have united Ottomar and Carla was torn asunder for ever, even if what she had just seen were only the sudden delirium of the moment. But how could that be, when she thought of Carla's intense frivolity, which had often caused her such anxiety; and of the Count's audacity, from which she had from the first instinctively shrunk, and of which he had even now given such proof; when she re-

membered the confidential whispering, the coquettish flirting, the many, many things which had taken place between the two in her very presence, and which had been so displeasing and offensive, but, above all, so incomprehensible to her, and of which she now found so terrible an explanation! What would Ottomar say? He must hear of it! What would he do? Perhaps exult that the chain which fettered him was broken—in good time! But that would not be like Ottomar. No man would take it patiently—and he! so sensitive, passionate, and violent, who had so often risked his life in a duel on the slightest provocation—a disagreeable word, a look—which gave him offence! But, on the other hand, had he really a right to feel himself offended? Had he really tried to retain Carla's love, or even first to win it, as it was his duty to do, after he became engaged to her? Had he not neglected her in the eyes of the world? left her, unguarded and unsheltered, to throw herself into that roaring whirlpool of social life in which she had formerly moved with such fatal enjoyment, and in which she had gained such brilliant triumphs? If so, he would have no betrayed love, only wounded vanity to avenge—to risk his life for a thing in which he did not himself believe, only be-

cause in the eyes of society this sad comedy of errors needed a sanguinary end. Oh! this miserable slavery, in which she had once fancied herself happy and free, only because she had not learnt how a free heart beats, and for what a soul longs which that heart has set free, and which now spreads out its wings to soar away from all these wretched barriers of prejudice and illusion into the clear atmosphere of a noble and unselfish love! She could no longer bear to remain between the high, straight hedges and the interwoven branches of the beech-walk, in which here and there appeared stone gods and goddesses in odd and exaggerated attitudes, as if startled at the sight of one who could think and feel so differently to those who had their pride and joy in these quaint, old-fashioned splendours.

Away! away! to him she loved, if it might be, to seek shelter in his strong arms from this hollow, unreal world, to weep out upon his faithful breast her grief and indignation, to feel free in his presence from all this self-made sorrow, this foolish misery, and never, never again to leave him. And if this highest happiness were denied her, if she must return to the slavery of these intolerable circumstances —out into the open then, over the brown

meadows, through the dark fields, to the white dunes which peeped out in the distance, to have one look at the sea—his beloved sea! Might it but bring her a greeting from her beloved, a waft of his breath to cool her hot brow, to refresh her burning eyes, were it only by a tear of unsatisfied longing!

Over the brown meadows and through the dark fields Elsa hurried, in the direction of a farm which lay before her at some distance, and which she must pass if she followed any further the sandy path, which looked as if it would take her quickest to her goal. The path led her ever nearer to the farm, and at last directly into it. Elsa did not like it; she would rather have met no one, since she dared not hope to meet him for whom she longed; but an attempt to get round the outside of the barn was frustrated by wet ground here and a hedge there. She must turn back or pass through the farm—a little, melancholy, quiet farm, a few tumble-down out-buildings, from which the dwelling-house was only to be distinguished by the windows—which looked dilapidated enough too—and by the two lime-trees, which in summer made a pleasant shade before the door, but whose bare, leafless branches now projected in a ghostly manner over the

decayed thatched roof against the grey sky.

A tall, broad-shouldered man came out from a barn-door, followed by a little dog, who flew at the stranger, barking loudly. The man called the animal back. At the first sound of his voice, Elsa, to whom the whole scene had appeared wonderfully familiar, as if she must have seen it before, recognised the honest farmer who had so kindly sheltered her last autumn.

"Herr Pölitz!" she said, holding out her hand. "You have forgotten me."

A look of joy came over the sunburnt face. "Come, this is good of you to pay us a visit!"

"You knew, then, that I was in Warnow?"

The farmer smiled in his melancholy way.

"How should the like of us not know such a thing? But that you should have remembered us! My wife will be so pleased."

He went towards the house. Elsa was very sorry to spoil the pleasure of these worthy people, but she could not permit herself even so trifling an untruth. The farmer's face clouded, as she explained, with some embarrassment, that during the week she had been at Warnow she had never been beyond

the garden, and had not now intended any visit; in fact, that she had not known that these buildings, which she had often enough seen from her window across the fields, were Herr Pölitz's farm. "But," she added, "I should have come had I known, or as soon as I discovered it. For that I give you my word."

"We could not have expected it," answered the farmer; "but since you say so, I believe you. But will you not come in?" he added hesitatingly.

"Yes, for a minute, to speak to your wife and to see the children."

"The children!"

As they now stood before the door, the farmer laid his brown hand on her arm, and said in a low voice:

"Don't ask after little Carl. Since Christmas he has slept over there in the churchyard. It was a sorrowful Christmas. But in a few days, if God will, we shall again have two."

He left Elsa no time to answer, but opened the low house-door—how well Elsa remembered the rattling bell!—called out to his wife, and showed his guest into the parlour on the left. As she went in, the figure of a woman rose up from a stool near the stove,

whom Elsa in the dusk, which already prevailed in the room, with its small, dull windows, took for Frau Pölitz, but on coming nearer, saw that it was a young and pretty, but pale and sickly-looking girl. She greeted her in a shy and embarrassed manner, and went away without speaking a word.

"A sister of mine," said the farmer, answering Elsa's look, in a low voice and turning away his head. "Will you not sit down? If you will allow me, I will go myself and look for my wife."

He went out. Elsa would have preferred to follow him. The close atmosphere in the little, over-heated room nearly took away her breath; and worse than the atmosphere was the sense of misery which was so palpable here, and spoke so distinctly in the farmer's melancholy face, in the girl's white cheeks, in everything on which her glance fell—even in the gloomy silence of the wretched farmyard and in the dilapidated house. Had she fled from the splendid misery of the castle only to find the same helpless sorrow in the little farmhouse? But at least it was not self-made suffering, so that it must awaken compassion, though it could not revolt the soul like what she had just experienced. How could she refuse these poor people the only

thing they had asked of her—a tender word of compassion ?

The farmer came in with his wife. He had already told her all—that the young lady could only say a word in passing to-day, but that in a few days she would come and spend a longer time with them. "Hardly in a few days," said the farmer; "we are going to have bad weather. I must even urge the young lady not to remain too long; it may break up this evening."

He had been standing at the window, and now left the room, murmuring a few words of apology, of which Elsa only understood "roof" and "cover."

"It is the roof of the barn," explained his wife; "it is so rotten he has had to take down one corner, and must now cover it over as well as he can, that the storm may not carry away the rest. To be sure it may be all one to him. We must leave at Easter anyhow."

"How is that ?" asked Elsa.

"Our lease is not renewed," answered the woman; "and no new farmer is coming either. Everything here is to be pulled down and a big hotel built, so they say. God knows what will become of us !"

The poor woman, who looked even paler

and more worn in her present condition than in the autumn, sighed deeply. Elsa tried to comfort her with words of sympathy. "It would be easy for a man like Herr Pölitz to find something else, and if capital was wanting to rent a new, and perhaps larger and better farm, some means would be devised for that also. The great thing was, not to lose courage herself. She must think only of her husband, who took life hardly enough as it was, and whose strength would be paralysed if she lost heart. She must think of the child that remained to her, and of the other that was coming, and everything would come right."

The woman smiled through her tears.

"Ah!" she said, "what a comfort it is to hear such words from kind people! It does not last long, but for the moment one feels lighter; and that is a great deal when one's heart is so heavy. That is what I always say to the Captain. He is just like you."

A thrill of joy passed through Elsa. Reinhold had been here! He had also sought the place to which her thoughts had so often returned.

"He has often been here already," said Frau Pölitz; "only the day before yesterday

he came on foot; but generally he goes in his boat to Ahlbeck."

"How far is it to Wissow?" asked Elsa.

"About four or five miles if you go right over Wissow Head; three miles to the Head, and half as much down to Wissow. You can see it there from the top. It is very fine up there on a summer's day. We used to go there very often formerly, but we never go now."

The pale girl here came in, took a key from a shelf near the door, and went out again immediately.

"Your sister-in-law is here to nurse you?" said Elsa. "The poor girl seems rather to need nursing herself."

"Yes, God knows!" said Frau Pölitz. She pulled at her apron with an embarrassed look and drew nearer to Elsa on the little sofa, and went on in a low voice, "I ought not to talk about it, but you are so kind and good, and it lies so terribly heavy on my mind. If you would——"

"If your husband has forbidden you to speak, you had better not tell me."

The woman shook her head.

"No, no, not that; he does not know—at least I hope not, although since yesterday—perhaps it is as well——"

"Tell me then, it may calm you," said Elsa, who was frightened at the woman's evident excitement.

"Yes, yes; true," said Frau Pölitz; "and you might also advise me as to what I shall do. Marie is—she has—if you look at me like that I cannot tell you—she has always been in all other respects a good, industrious, clever girl, only sometimes a little high-flown, poor thing. She was housekeeper over at Golm to the Count, for two years, although my husband never approved of it, as in a large house like that—you know well how it is—there are so many people, and in a bachelor's establishment it is difficult to keep order and discipline. But she had good wages, and all went on well till last Michaelmas, when she suddenly gave warning, without saying a word to us, and went to Sundin, also as housekeeper, to the President's. But that did not last long, and the President's lady, who is a very good lady—may God reward her!—looked after her; and we knew nothing about it, all until the poor infant died, in November. My husband was quite frantic, as he lays great store by his family, which has seen better days, and especially this sister, who had always been his pet. But what was to be done? What is done is done, and when

at Christmas our little Carl died, and I could not well manage the household work, I wrote to the President's lady and she sent her here to us, and wrote at the same time such a kind letter. I will show it to you next time you come. Marie has been a real help to me, and has cost us nothing. She has saved something, and the President's lady also helped, and she has often offered me her little store. Of course I have never taken it, although I am convinced that it is honestly earned, and that he—the father—has never troubled himself about the poor thing. She told me that herself, but always added, 'He knew nothing of it—nothing at all.' But that is impossible to believe, even if we, my husband and I, had no suspicion as to who could be the father. The name should never pass her lips, the poor girl said. And even yesterday it never did so." The woman paused for a few moments, as if to gather strength for what she still had to relate. Elsa's heart beat with sympathy, and with a dull fear, which increased every moment, for which, however, she could not account. What possible reference could the poor girl's story have to her? The woman had come quite close to her, and went on in a still lower voice: "Yesterday afternoon, just at this time, my husband was behind there at

the barn, Marie was ironing, with the child in the room next the kitchen, where, if you remember, the window looks on to the garden, and I was here washing, when some riders came up to the farm——" Elsa's heart gave a leap, and she involuntarily turned away from the woman. "Good heavens!" exclaimed the latter; "I trusted the Captain. He told me the day before yesterday that there was not a word of truth in the report about here that you were going to marry the Count. If it is true, I dare not say another word!"

"Thank God it is not the case," said Elsa, by a strong effort overcoming her emotion. "The Count is then the man?"

Frau Pölitz nodded. "She cannot any longer deny it, and indeed she confessed as much to me, when I brought her to herself. They had dismounted and come into the house; the Count said that the young lady was unwell, and begged for a cup of coffee. May God forgive him, but it was certainly untrue, as the young lady was not the least unwell; on the contrary, did nothing but laugh, and they went through the house straight into the garden. A few old trees stand in it, and the hedges are also rather overgrown, so that it is quite sheltered; but

Marie must have seen more than the poor girl could bear; and as I stood there by the stove she suddenly shrieked out, so that I thought she had let the heater of the iron fall on her foot, or that the child had hurt itself, and rushed in. There she lay on her back on the floor, and I thought she was dead, as she neither moved nor stirred, and was cold as ice and white as a sheet. You may easily imagine how frightened I was, and I may thank God that it was no worse. I called out, and Rike, our maidservant, came, and I sent her for my husband; and it was well I did so, for Marie came to herself, looked all round her with a bewildered, glassy stare, and then to the window, and asked timidly, 'Is he still there?' I knew then for certain, and begged her, for God's sake, to keep silence before Carl, my husband. But since then he has been so odd; I am afraid he must have remarked something when he went into the garden to tell the Count that they must wait a little for the coffee and so forth. The Count would not hear anything more about the coffee, and the young lady told me how sorry she was. She had had no idea that we had an invalid in the house. Upon which my husband said, 'Excuse me, ma'am, my sister is not an invalid, she has only just been taken

ill;' and he said it so strangely, with his eyes fixed as if some other thought were in his mind. What shall I do? Shall I tell him? What do you think?"

Frau Pölitz held both Elsa's hands clasped in hers and looked anxiously into her eyes.

"I think—yes," said Elsa. "You cannot keep it from him in the end, and a wife should have no secrets from her husband. It seems to me that all the evil in the world comes from our keeping and concealing from one another our most sacred feelings, as if we had reason to be ashamed of them; as if we did not live in them—only in them!"

She stood up and seized her hat and shawl from the round table.

"You are going already?" said Frau Pölitz sorrowfully; "but indeed it is a long way to Warnow."

"I have much farther to go," said Elsa, putting on her hat. "Three miles, did you say?"

"Where to?"

"To Wissow Head." Frau Pölitz stared at Elsa, as if she were talking nonsense. "Yes," said Elsa, "to the Head. I cannot miss the way?"

"A road goes from here straight through the marshes, but makes a great bend at Ahl-

beck on account of the brook. But, my dear young lady, for heaven's sake what do you want to go there for?"

Elsa had put on her shawl, and now grasped Frau Pölitz by both hands. "I will tell you. To have one look—one look only—at the place where the man I love lives. You need not look at me so anxiously, dear Frau Pölitz. He really lives at Wissow."

"The Superintendent of Pilots?" exclaimed Frau Pölitz.

She sat down and burst into tears of joy.

"You also love him," said Elsa with a proud smile.

"Oh! indeed I do," cried Frau Pölitz, sobbing; "and oh! how happy my husband will be! May I tell him——"

"You may tell whom you will."

"Oh! how pleased I am! You could not have given me greater pleasure than to tell me this. It makes me feel quite young again. Such a charming gentleman as he is, and such a dear, dear young lady! I feel sure that everything must go right now."

She kissed Elsa's hand again and again, with hot tears. Elsa gently disengaged herself. "I will tell you everything next time. Now I must go."

"No," said Frau Pölitz, standing up, "you

must not walk such a long way; my husband shall drive you."

"I am determined to walk," said Elsa.

"You cannot be back before dark. It is already beginning to get dark, and we are certainly going to have bad weather."

Elsa would allow no objection to weigh with her. She was a good walker and had eyes like a hawk. She feared neither the distance nor the darkness.

With that she once more shook Frau Pölitz's hand, and the next minute had left room, and house, and farm, and was walking quickly through the fields along the road, of which the farmer's wife had spoken, towards the headland, whose broad mass stood out from the wide plain.

CHAPTER III.

IT was three miles, Frau Pölitz had said, to Wissow Head, but it seemed to Elsa as if the long, winding road would never come to an end. And yet she walked so quickly, that the little empty waggon which at first was far ahead of her, was now as far behind. That wretched vehicle was the only sign of human life. Besides that, only the brown plain, like a desert waste, as far as her eye could reach. No large trees, only here and there a few stunted willows, and some wretched shrubs by the ditches which intersected each other here and there, and by the broad sluggish stream which she now crossed by means of a rickety and unprotected wooden bridge. The stream evidently flowed from the chain of hills on her right hand, at the foot of which Elsa could see far apart the buildings of

Gristow and of Damerow, the two other properties belonging to Warnow.

Taking a long circuit, she gradually ascended to Wissow Head, which lay straight before her, whilst the plain to the left stretched without the smallest undulation to the low-lying dunes, which only showed white here and there over the edge of the moor. Only once, for a few minutes, a leaden-grey streak showed through a gap by which the brook made its way, which Elsa knew must be the sea, although she could scarcely distinguish it from the sky, for the sky above her was the same leaden colour too, only that towards the east, over the sea, it seemed somewhat darker than over the hills to the west, and in the leaden firmament hung here and there a solitary whitish speck like the smoke of gunpowder, which in the motionless air remained always in the same spot. Not the slightest breath was stirring, but from time to time a strange murmur passed across the waste, as if the brown moor was trying to rouse itself from its long slumber; and through the heavy, gloomy atmosphere there came a sound as of a soft, long-drawn-out, plaintive wail, and then again a death-like stillness, in which Elsa seemed to hear the beating of her heart.

But more fearful almost than the stillness

of this desert spot was the shrieking of a great flock of sea-gulls, which she had startled from one of the many hollows on the moors, and which now hovered hither and thither in the grey atmosphere, their pointed bills turned downwards, and followed her for a long time, as if in furious anger at this intruder upon their domain.

Nevertheless she walked on and on, quicker and quicker, following an impulse which she would allow no considerations of prudence to check, which was stronger even than the dread which earth and sky whispered to her with ghost-like breath, threatening and warning her with supernatural voices. And then came another more terrible fear. Far away in the distance, at the foot of the headland, which ever stood out more majestically before her, she had fancied she saw dark moving objects, and now that she approached nearer, she was convinced of it. Labourers—many hundred—who were working at an apparently endless embankment, which had already reached a considerable height.

She could not avoid crossing the embankment, even if she made a great circuit; she must pass through the long line of workmen. She did so with a courteous greeting to those who stood nearest to her. The men, who

were already working lazily enough, let their barrows stand, and stared at her without returning her greeting. As she passed on, loud shouts and coarse laughter sounded behind her. Turning involuntarily, she saw that two of the number had followed her, and only stopped as she turned, perhaps also checked by the noise made by the others.

She continued on her way, almost running. There was now only a narrow path over the short withered grass and across the sandy tracts which alternated on the slope of the hill. Elsa said to herself that she should remain within sight of the men till she reached the top, and might at any time be followed by them. But if she turned back in the deepening twilight the men would perhaps have left off work; no overseer would be there to keep their rudeness in check, and there would be the whole endless plain as far as Warnow in which these rough men might bewilder, terrify, and insult her. Should she turn back at once, while it was yet time? beg for the escort of one of the overseers? or take refuge in the waggon which she had before overtaken, and which was now close to the workmen, or in another vehicle, which from the height on which she stood she could now see in the distance, and which must also have followed

her, as there was no other road over the plain.

Whilst Elsa was thus deliberating with herself, she hastened, as if under a spell, with beating heart, up the incline, whose top stood out sharply in a straight line against the grey sky between her and the sea.

With every step the sea and the line of dunes stretched broader and farther to the left, and her gaze wandered out to where the vapour of the sea and sky mingled together, and over the beautifully curved line of the coast to the wooded heights of Golmberg, whose purple masses hung threateningly over.

Above the confused mass of crowded tree-tops rose the tower of the castle. Between Golmberg yonder and the height on which she stood was the brown plain over which she had passed—inhospitable as the sea itself, from which it was only divided by the yellow outline of the dunes. The only abode of mankind was the fishing hamlet of Ahlbeck, which, close to the foot of the promontory, now lay almost directly at her feet. There also, between the houses and the sea, on the broad strand, were long moving lines of workmen as far as the two piers, which, curving towards each other, ran out into the sea. At the piers were two or three large vessels,

which seemed to be unloading, whilst a fleet of fishing-boats, all on the same course, were making for the shore. Though all the sails were set, yet the boats were really only moved by the oars. The uniform position of the brown sails and the monotonous movements of the oars, formed a curious contrast to the confused whirring of the white gulls, who, as before, circled incessantly above her head, between her and the shore.

She saw it all with her clear-sighted eyes, as a traveller on the railway mechanically observes the details of the landscape which the train rushes through, while his thoughts are at home, tasting the rapture which he will feel after his long separation from those he loves. And she, alas! dared not hope to look into the dear eyes, to hold the loved hands in hers, to hear the sound of that strong, yet gentle and kind voice. She only wanted to see the place where he lived.

And it seemed as if even that small consolation was to be denied to her. She had already wandered some way along the path on the top of the hill, without gaining the slightest glimpse of the other side, where Wissow must lie, only the sky looked leaden over the edge of the plateau. Perhaps she might see it if she followed the broader road that she had

now reached, and that, coming from her right, led upwards along the side of the hill to a heap of immense logs, above which rose a huge signal-post, which must be erected on the topmost height of the headland, and probably also on its extreme edge.

And in fact, as she now climbed higher and higher, a pale streak appeared to her right—the shore of the mainland—and then again the leaden surface of the sea, on which here and there a sail was seen, and at last, immediately beneath her on this side, a white point of dune, which spread gradually like a wedge towards the headland, until it formed a little peninsula, in the centre of which lay a dozen or so of houses of various sizes between the white sands and the brown moor. That was Wissow! That must be Wissow!

And now, as she stood on the point which she had reached by the exertion of all her physical and moral powers, and however lovingly she stretched out her arms, felt that the object of her desires still lay so far off, so utterly beyond her reach—now for the first time she believed that she understood the dumb, terrifying voices of the solitude and loneliness around her, the whispering and rustling of the moor, the wailing spirit-voices in the air. Alone! alone!

Infinite sorrow welled up in her heart, her knees gave way, she sank down upon a stone near the logs, buried her face in her hands, and burst into tears like a helpless, lost child. She did not see that a man, who was leaning against the signal-post behind the logs, watching the sea, startled by the strange sound near him, stepped forward. She did not hear his steps as he hastened towards her over the short turf.

"Elsa!"

She sprang up with a half-stifled cry.

"Elsa!"

And again she cried out—a wild cry of joy, which rang strangely through the stillness, and she lay on his breast, clinging to him like a drowning woman.

"Reinhold! My Reinhold!"

She wept, she laughed, she cried again and again: "Reinhold, my Reinhold!"

Speechless with happiness and astonishment at the sweet surprise, he drew her down to him on the stone on which she had been sitting.

She leaned her head on his breast. "I have so longed for you."

"Elsa, my darling Elsa!"

"I was forced to come, I could not help it; I was drawn here, as if by invisible hands. And now I have you! Oh! do not leave me

again. Take me with you yonder to your home. My home is there with you. With you! Do not drive me out again into the desolate, false and loveless world which lies behind me. With you only is happiness, peace, joy, truth, fidelity! Oh! how your true loving heart beats, I feel it. It loves me as I love you. It has longed for me, as my poor, distracted heart has longed for you."

"Yes, my Elsa, it has longed for you intensely, unspeakably. I came up here because it gave me no peace. I wanted to have one look only to where you were—one last look, before——"

"Before what—for heaven's sake!"

He had led her the few steps to the logs, and now stood, with his arm round her, close to the edge of the hill, which sloped so precipitously down from its frowning brow, that they seemed to be hanging immediately over the grey sea in the grey sky.

"Look, Elsa! There comes the storm. I hear it, I see it, as if it were already let loose. It may be hours first, but it will come, it must come with terrible fury. Everything shows signs of it. That leaden sea below us will be tossed in wild waves, whose spray will be thrown up even to this height. Woe to the

ships that are not already safe in harbour, and perhaps even there they are not secure from its wild fury. Woe to the low-lying lands beneath us. I meant to have written to you this morning, because I saw it coming even yesterday, and to tell you that you would do better to leave Warnow, but you would not have gone."

"Never! I am so proud that you trust me, that you have told me this. And if the storm breaks, and I know that your dear life is in danger, I will be firm; or if I tremble I will not fear, only to myself I will say, 'He could not do his duty, he could not be the brave true man whom I love, if he knew that I were weeping and wringing my hands, whilst he must guide and command as on that evening;' do you remember? Do you know, my darling, that I loved you then? and do you remember you told me that I had the eyes of a sailor? Oh! how I remember every word, every look, and how pleased I was that I was not obliged to give you back the compass directly! I did not mean to keep it. I meant you to have it again."

"You were more honest then than I was, my darling. I was determined not to give you back your glove. You had taken it off when you were looking through my

telescope; it lay on the deck and I took it up. Since then it has never left me. See! it has been my talisman. We sailors are superstitious. I have sworn never to part with it, until instead of the glove, I hold your dear hand in mine for ever."

He kissed the little grey glove before he returned it to his breast-pocket. They had again seated themselves on the stone—softly whispering, caressing, jesting, in loving talk, heart to heart and lip to lip, forgetting, in the paradise of their young love, the desert which surrounded them, the darkness which was ever deepening, and the storm which was brooding in the leaden air, over the leaden sea, like the angel of destruction over a world which he hoped to annihilate for ever, and to cast back into primeval chaos. A dull rumbling sound quivering in the distance attracted their attention; followed immediately by a sound of rushing through the air, without any motion that they could feel even at this height, and then again followed the deathlike stillness.

Reinhold sprang up.

"It comes quicker than I thought. We have not a moment to lose."

"What are you going to do?"

"To take you back."

"You cannot. You must be at your post. You did not come to Warnow this morning on account of it. How can you now absent yourself so far, when the danger is much nearer? No, no, my darling, do not look so anxiously at me. I must learn to live without fear, and I will. I am quite determined. From this moment there shall be no fear, even before the world. I cannot live any longer without you, and you cannot live without me. If I were still in ignorance—but now I know! And, believe me, my dear father will be the first to understand. He must have known already when he said to me, what he also wrote to you, 'I leave your fate in your own hands.' Ottomar and my aunt may share my inheritance; my proud father would have taken nothing from me, and you—you take me as I am, and lead me to your home for ever. One more look at my paradise! One more kiss, and now farewell! farewell!"

She embraced him fervently, and then would have freed herself, but he held her hand fast.

"It is impossible, Elsa; it is already growing dark up here, and in half an hour below it will be night. You cannot be certain of keeping to the road, which can no longer be

distinguished from the moor, and that is full of deep bogs. It is really impossible, Elsa."

"It must be possible. I should despise myself if I kept you back from your duty; and how could you continue to love me, and not to look upon your love as a burden, if I did so? How do you know that you may not be wanted at the shortest notice? At this moment possibly the men may be standing helpless, and looking out for their leader. Reinhold, by your love! am I right or not?"

"You are indeed right, but——"

"No 'but,' my darling, we must part."

They were as they spoke hastening hand-in-hand along the path by which Elsa had before reached the top, and now stood on the cross way which led on one side to the Warnow moor, and on the other to Wissow.

"Only to the foot. Till I know you are on the right path," said Reinhold.

"Not a step farther. Hark! What is that?"

He had also noticed it already—a sound as of horses' feet, galloping on the hard turf behind the slope of the hill which rose before them and concealed from them any farther view of the other and more precipitous side. The next moment a rider appeared in sight

over the hill. He had now reached the top, and pulling up his horse, rose in his saddle and appeared to be looking round him.

"It is the Count," said Elsa.

A deep glow came into her face.

"You must accompany me a little way now," she said, drawing a deep breath. "Come."

She took his arm. At that moment the Count, who had been looking above them, looked down, and saw the pair. He put spurs to his horse, and galloping down the slope, was with them in a trice. He had no doubt recognised Reinhold at once, for when be checked his horse and took off his hat, his countenance did not show the slightest trace of wonder or astonishment. He seemed in fact not to see Reinhold, as if he had met Elsa alone.

"This is good luck indeed. How delighted your aunt will be. She is waiting there; the carriage could not come any farther."

He pointed with the handle of his whip over the slope of the hill.

"I assure you it is so, though you seem so astonished. Your aunt was very uneasy at your long absence—inquired in the neighbourhood—learnt from Pölitz that you had come here—a strange fancy, by Jove!—your

aunt was determined to come herself—I had just returned with Fräulein von Wallbach, and begged to escort her—was beginning to despair. Awfully lucky! May I be allowed to accompany you to the carriage? it is not a hundred yards off."

He had swung himself from his saddle, and held his horse by the bridle.

Reinhold looked straight into Elsa's eyes. She understood and answered the look.

"We are much obliged to you, Count Golm," he said, "but we will not trespass on your kindness one instant longer than is necessary. I will myself conduct my betrothed to the Baroness."

"Ah!" said the Count.

He had pictured to himself beforehand the terrible embarrassment which, in his opinion, the two culprits would feel on becoming aware of his presence, and the shock that the Baroness would experience if he could tell her in what company he had had the happiness of meeting her niece. He took it for granted that on his arrival the fellow would take himself off to Wissow, with some embarrassed words of explanation. And now he could not believe his ears, and he could hardly trust his eyes, as Elsa and this fellow, turning their backs upon him, walked off arm-

in-arm, as if he had not been there. With one spring he was again in his stirrups.

"Allow me at least to announce the joyful news to the Baroness!" he cried, as bowing sarcastically he galloped past and hastened up the hill, behind which he almost immediately disappeared.

"Wretch!" said Elsa; "thank you, Reinhold, for having understood me, for having freed me for ever from him and all. You cannot imagine how thankful I am, nor why I am so thankful. I will not trouble your loving heart yet with the hateful things I have learned. I will tell you another time. Happen what will, I am yours, you are mine. That happiness is so great, everything else is in comparison small and insignificant."

At a slight distance from them stood the open carriage, and beside it a horseman. They thought it was the Count, but on coming nearer they saw that it was a servant. The Count had vanished. As soon as he had imparted the great discovery, with a sneering laugh to the Baroness, receiving no other reply than, "I am obliged to you, Count, for your escort so far"—the two last words being pronounced with peculiar emphasis—he again took off his hat and rode away over the hill.

The Baroness got out of the carriage and came towards the lovers. Elsa dropped Reinhold's arm and hastened towards her aunt. Her impetuous embrace told all that was necessary. As Reinhold stepped forward, the Baroness held out her hand to him, and said in an agitated voice, "You bring me my dear child—and yourself. I thank you doubly."

Reinhold kissed the trembling hand. "There is no time to make speeches," he said, "and your kind heart knows what I feel. God bless you!"

"And you also, my Reinhold," cried Elsa, throwing her arms round him; "God bless you! Good luck and joy be with you!"

He had helped the ladies into the carriage, one more pressure of the loved hand, and the vehicle started off, preceded by the servant. In spite of the hilly nature of the ground, it was possible to go quickly, as the soil was firm and the road good, even up here on the top, and Reinhold had urged the utmost speed. Only a few minutes had passed, therefore, before the carriage disappeared behind the hill, and half an hour must elapse before it again came in sight on the plain. He had no time to wait for that. He dared not lose another moment. The beacons were already

lighted below in Wissow. At that moment a light shone over the sea, it was the signal for a pilot. It would be instantly obeyed, he knew; but at any moment some new arrangements might be necessary which would require his presence. He would take a quarter of an hour to get there at his quickest pace. He sprang in great bounds down the hill, when a horseman rose up right before him out of a dip in the ground which lay in the direction of the hills to the right, and remained standing on the path. He appeared so suddenly that Reinhold nearly ran against the horse.

"You are in a great hurry now, it seems," said the Count.

"I am in a great hurry," answered Reinhold, breathless from his quick run, as he tried to pass the horse. The Count turned it round so that he now faced Reinhold.

"Make way!" cried Reinhold.

"I am on my own land," answered the Count.

"The road is free!"

"And you are for freedom in all things!"

"Once more! Make way!"

"When it suits me."

Reinhold seized the bridle, and the horse, struck sharply by the spurs on either side, reared up. Reinhold started back.

The next moment he had drawn a long dirk, which, sailor-like, was always at his side.

"I should be sorry for the horse," he cried, "but if you will have it——"

"I only wished to say good-evening to you, Captain; I forgot it before. Good-evening."

The Count took off his hat with a sneering laugh, turned his horse round again, and rode off down into the hollow out of which he had come.

"Such people never learn," murmured Reinhold, as he put up his knife. It was a speech he had often heard from his uncle Ernst. His uncle Ernst, who must have felt as he now did, in the terrible moment when the sword descended upon him. Her father's sword. Good God! is it really true that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children? That this strife will last for ever, from generation to generation? That we, who are blameless, must take it up against our will and our convictions?

A clap of thunder, still in the distance, but coming nearer, rolled through the heavy air, louder and more threatening than the last, followed again by a tremendous gust of wind, not this time in the upper strata of clouds, but already descending upon the heights and

slopes, and wailing and groaning as it died away in the hollows. The next gust might strike the sea, and let loose the storm which would come up with the tide.

Another struggle was impending before which human malice would seem as child's play, and human hatred an offence, and only one feeling would remain victorious—Love!

Reinhold felt this in the lowest depths of his heart, as he now tried to make up for the moments lost in so painfully trifling a way, and hastened down in spite of all to risk his life if necessary for the lives of other men.

CHAPTER IV.

FEW words passed between the ladies until they reached home. The aunt appeared to be suffering from extreme exhaustion that was increased by the rough drive over the bad road, which, as Reinhold had foretold, they could hardly distinguish from the heath in the rapidly approaching darkness; and to all this was added the oppressive sultriness of the thick damp atmosphere, in which even Elsa herself found breathing difficult. She also was silent though her heart was full, for she had thankfully perceived that, come what might, her aunt would be on her side. Had she not answered the announcement of Elsa's engagement to Reinhold, startling as it must have been to her, unhesitatingly, with a warm embrace which was more eloquent than any words? And now she scarcely once let go

her hand, or if she did so for a moment it was only to seize it again immediately as if she wished at least to assure her of her sympathy and love, though in her weakness she could do no more for her.

They reached the castle at last. The Baroness sank almost fainting into her maid's arms, and was immediately conducted by her, with the help of Elsa, to her own apartments. "Thank you a thousand, thousand times," said Elsa, as she wished her aunt good-night.

She was the less inclined to look for Carla in the drawing-room where she would probably be, as she heard that Frau von Wallbach had already gone to her room—to read, as she always gave out herself—to sleep, as Carla maintained. The chattering lady's-maid told Elsa, without waiting to be asked, that the Count had come there again shortly before their return, but only for a few minutes, and had brought Fräulein von Wallbach word that they would soon be back, probably with Captain Schmidt. The girl smiled as she uttered the last word, not so much but that she could have denied it if need were, but still just sufficiently to show the young lady that she knew more, and was quite ready, if asked, to place at her disposal her good advice and experience. The Count then had made

good use of his time. Let him! for whatever reasons, whether out of hatred to Reinhold, out of jealousy (the ugly word was only too good in this case), out of miserable offended vanity, or only for the malicious satisfaction of himself and Carla, let him tell all Berlin to-morrow, as he had to-day told the inhabitants of the castle, what had happened. He would not certainly long have the pleasure of spreading about so precious a secret under the seal of mystery. The announcement of the engagement would soon enough break the seal, and could no longer be delayed. The post from Jasmund to Prora passed through Warnow at nine o'clock. There was just time. Elsa seated herself at the little table in the deep bow which was her favourite seat on account of the view from the window over the plain as far as the sea and Wissow Head, and wrote with flying pen a few heartfelt lines to her father. Neither she nor Reinhold had intended, since they were assured of each other's love, to do otherwise than wait patiently for brighter and happier days. But after what had happened she must be careful; there must be no gossip connected with the name of her father's daughter. No one could know that better, or feel it more deeply, than the dear kind father in whose righteous hands

she now laid her righteous cause. She gave the letter into the care of an old and faithful servant, who, during the long absence of the owners, had been in charge of the castle, and now walked up and down her room in a strange, half-frightened, half-joyful, but wholly overpowering state of emotion. "Elsa von Werben — Reinhold Schmidt, Superintendent of Pilots. Betrothed. Berlin —Wissow." A Superintendent of Pilots! How odd! What is it exactly?—and Wissow! Does anybody know where Wissow is?—Wissow, ladies and gentlemen, is a little sandy peninsula, with about twenty houses, not one of which is a quarter the size of the shooting-box at Golmberg, or of one of the out-buildings of the ancestral castle of Golm, whose courtyard gate you pass on the road from Prora to Warnow. How extraordinary! Really! But she always had extraordinary taste!—and how wise of the Count to draw back in time from so unseemly a competition. He is said to be otherwise an agreeable man. That is always said afterwards. An officer of the reserve too. A la bonne heure! In that case the General's daughter could really no longer hesitate. And Elsa laughed and danced as she pictured to herself many well-known voices in this little concert, to which

old Baroness Kniebreche beat time with her great black fan, but she started back as she skipped past the window, when a dazzling flash of lightning lit up the broad plain with a pale light, the Pölitz's farm lying there as clearly as in broad daylight, and at the same moment a long rolling peal of thunder made the windows rattle. And then it seemed as if an earthquake shook the very foundations of the castle. The tiles rattled from the high roof, shutters clapped to, doors banged, whole windows must have been blown out, as the wind moaned and whistled and howled round the walls and gables and through the joints and crevices. Running, hurrying, and calling resounded through the castle; steps approached her door. It was her aunt's elderly maid: "Would she come to her aunt? she was so dreadfully restless and excited, and it was impossible even for the young lady to think of sleep in such horrible weather." Elsa was ready at once. She wanted to go to her aunt to thank her for her kind consideration, and to beg her for her sake on no account to deprive herself of the rest which, after such a trying day, was so necessary to her. She said as much to the maid, who only shook her head and answered nothing, but conducted Elsa in silence to her lady's door.

Valerie came to meet Elsa at the door. Elsa was startled at the deadly-white, tear-stained face. She could only imagine that the shock of the tremendous thunderclap had increased her aunt's malady to this pitch; she begged her to calm herself; to allow herself to be put to bed; she would remain with her —the whole night. Her aunt would take courage when she saw how courageous she herself was, who certainly had sufficient cause for anxiety.

She led the tottering, trembling woman to the sofa, and would have rung for her maid, but the other caught her hand convulsively, and pulled her down by her on the seat. "No, no," she murmured, "not that; it is you I want; you must stay, but not because I am afraid of the storm—I fear something much worse than that."

She sprang up and began walking up and down, wringing her hands, through the large room, which was but dimly lighted by a lamp on the table.

"I cannot bear it any longer. Now or never is the time. I must speak out—I must —I must."

She suddenly threw herself at Elsa's feet, as if struck down by the thunder which just then pealed above them, and clasped her knees.

"It has been my hope and consolation all this time, to confess to you, so pure, so good! To free myself from the thraldom in which my tyrant holds me. To make the highest, greatest sacrifice that I can make of the one bright spot in this dark world—your love!"

"You will not lose my love," said Elsa, "whatever you may confide to me, that I swear to you!"

"Do not swear it; you cannot. See, I feel even now, how your dear hands tremble, how your whole body shakes, how you are struggling to keep calm, and as yet you have heard nothing."

"How can I be calm when you are so terribly excited?" answered Elsa. "Look, aunt, I have long felt that something lies between you and me, something more than the unhappy family dissensions, so far as I know them—a secret which you have not ventured to tell me. I have often and often longed to beg you to tell me all, but have never had the courage to do so, though I have reproached myself for not having done it. But lately it has seemed to me that you have been more reserved towards me than at first, and that has made me still more anxious. And I also had a secret on my mind, and did not venture to confess my love to you, notwithstanding

that every hour I spend with you only makes me more certain that you—you above all others—would be just in the position to set aside the prejudice with which even my dear father is surrounded. Shall I confess it to you? Your relations with—with Signor Giraldi, however much you must have suffered and still must suffer from them—have seemed to me on this account to be comforting and encouraging. Whether you approve of my love or not, you will at least understand it, will be able to sympathise with what you must once have felt yourself, that one may love a man for himself alone, because one sees in him the ideal of all that appears to oneself to be worth loving. And now chance, if it is not wrong to speak of chance here, has snatched my secret from me. Take courage! Have confidence. Tell me all. You say it is the right moment, and it certainly is so. It must not be let slip. And now, dear aunt, rise up, and if I really am, as you said the first moment we met and now repeat again—your guardian angel, let me prove it—let me prove that in the midst of the happiness of my love for the best and noblest of men, I have the strength to free you, to restore to you the peace and joy for which your soul pines."

With gentle violence Elsa raised up her aunt, whose head had sunk upon her bosom, dried the tears on the lovely pale face, which seemed already somewhat calmer and more composed, threw her arms round her and made her lie down on the sofa, reseating herself on the stool by her side, after she had put the lamp out of the way on the console.

"I can only confess by the light of your dear eyes," said Valerie. "From any other my secret would creep back into my heart."

Outside the storm raged and thundered against the old castle, in long, unequal gusts, and whistled and howled round the walls, between the gables, as if wild with fury at meeting with resistance, and at this resistance defying its omnipotence.

"So will he rage," said Valerie, shuddering, "when he comes to-morrow and demands his victim, and she does not and will not follow him, if he does his worst, even if he annihilates her.

"Yes, Elsa, he is coming to-morrow; I found the letter when we came in. The diabolical scheme is ripe, which is to be the destruction of you, Ottomar—all of you. I myself only partly know this scheme. Hard as his heart is, he has yet discovered that my heart has gone from him—how much, how en-

tirely, he does not know, he does not even suspect, or she whom he once loved as well as he is capable of loving, and who so passionately loved him, would certainly no longer be alive. Yes, my dearest Elsa, I must begin with this terrible confession, or you would not understand the worse things that remain for me to tell. You would look upon me as the most degraded of our sex; even your loving heart could not absolve me—if indeed it ever can do so!

"I loved him with an infinite, unholy love, the fiend, who to this day entraps all who come under his pernicious influence, and whom you must have known in the beauty and lustre of his youth, to conceive how even good women found it hard to resist his fascinations.

"I was not absolutely bad, but neither was I good—not in my heart at least, which longed eagerly for fuller joy; nor was my imagination so pure as not to be allured and captivated by the world and its glory. I may have been so unhappily constituted by nature, or the frivolity and luxury of the court life to which I was so early introduced may have corrupted my young heart, I do not know, but so it was that my heart and imagination were alike undisciplined and uncontrolled. How otherwise could it have been that the bride, whose wed-

ding was to take place in a few weeks, fell desperately in love in one moment with a man whom she saw for the first time, and against whom, moreover, even her dulled conscience warned her, and that, in spite of all and of the utter hopelessness of this passion which she could not tear from her heart and—shame and misery!—with this passion for a stranger in her heart, she stood with her betrothed, in God's sight, before the altar, to plight him that troth which she had already broken in her heart, and which, indeed, she had already more than half resolved to break in reality.

"Do you shudder, my poor darling? I can tell you she had friends who would not have shuddered had they known! Yes, who knew it, and did not shudder, who, laughing, pointed to one who had already done so, and before whom no gentleman took off his hat the less respectfully, before whom the nobles of the land did not bow less low, and to whom learned men and artists did not the less render homage.

"Why should we not be allowed what was permitted to her? Were we less beautiful, less agreeable and clever? She borrowed from us the lustre which surrounded her. From whom did the fame of the Medician Court proceed, if not from us and such as we? So might

we also allow ourselves the liberty, which she permitted herself behind the cloak she borrowed from us.

"And now occurred what I never for one moment believed possible, had never even thought of. My husband gave up his embassy, quitted the public service for good, and wished to live here on his property with me—to live for me. If the latter were not a mere form of words, it did not mean much at least to my mind. The fact is, he had, in his usual methodical way, made a regular programme for his whole life, and in it was laid down, that after he had served the State for a certain number of years he should marry and retire to his estates. He now intended to live for me as formerly for the State; fulfilling his duty with anxious care, without enthusiasm, without pleasure—marriage was to him a task which must be got over like any other.

"He had concluded and arranged everything before he confided it to me. I was horrified, rebellious, distracted, furious, and yet—dared not by look or word betray my feelings. There was only one faint consolation for me, that the mission on which Giraldi had been employed at our Court (our duchess was a Roman Catholic, you know) was ended, and he must at any rate return to Rome. We

parted from each other with promises of eternal love, 'Even if we never see each other again,' I sobbed. 'We shall meet again,' said Giraldi, with that imperious smile that you know.

"I did not believe it. I was in despair. And with despair in my heart I arrived here.

"Was it really despair for the dreamed of happiness? Was it the soothing influence which the solemn neighbourhood of the sea, the melancholy solitude of the shore, exercised on my passionate heart? Was it that my better self was really getting the dominion at last? Little as I can say for myself, I may at least say this, that I took great pains to do my duty as the mistress of this house—the wealthy country lady. I tried even to love my husband, and there were moments when I thought I did love him. But only moments. I must admit that he was always and in all things a well-meaning man, who endeavoured to the utmost to act up to his favourite saying, 'Give every man his due,' so far as he understood it, and another woman would perhaps have been very happy with him. I was not, and could not be so. The profound difference between our characters could not be concealed, but seemed to show more clearly, the harder I tried to overcome it. He was

extremely well-informed, I might even say learned, but with a want of sensibility which provoked me, and with a poverty of imagination which drove me to despair. Nothing was great, nothing was sublime to him. For him there was nothing heroic, nothing divine. I tried to enter into his prosaic view of the world, into his narrow-minded judgment of people and things. I was forced sometimes to admit that he was right, that the selfish motives which he discovered everywhere had in many cases played a part, had contributed to bring about this or that result. But what was there in this melancholy satisfaction of the intellect, in comparison with all the noble spiritual qualities which were thus left to lie fallow and perish miserably.

"I felt that I was deteriorating. That whatever blossoms my mind still bore, were withering as they came under the influence of this dry atmosphere in which he lived, in which he moved and spoke. I felt that in the dry sands of this unvarying commonplace life the roots of my mind were one after another dying down, that I began to hate this life, which was no life to me, I who had so loved life!—that I began to hate my husband, who imposed upon me this torturing existence in place of life.

"It could not last so. I had become a mere shadow of myself. The doctors shook their heads. Ah! if I had but died then. But I was still so young, I wanted to live. I swear to you, Elsa, that was all I wished for. In four such years of suffering one fancies one has learned to give up even the faintest glimmer and hope of happiness. Strange delusion! As if one could live without happiness; as if I could have done so, with the ardent, insatiable heart I had; as if I were not at that very time giving proof that I could not do it.

"But, truly, it is easy to see this on looking back, but when one looks forward, one does not see it.

"My husband naturally considered it his duty to follow the doctor's advice, and to set off on a journey with his young wife. Let me be silent over the splendid misery of that journey. It brought change, diversion, but neither peace nor happiness; at the utmost, it deadened for a moment the wretchedness that reigned uninterruptedly in my innermost heart, greatly as the young wife in her renovated beauty was admired in the society of all the Courts which we visited. I may boast that I victoriously withstood all the temptations with which I was surrounded; and yet not altogether. For if I did so—if I remained

cold in presence of the passionate feelings which I roused in other hearts—if I was not touched by the love with which I inspired men whose worth I well knew, it was not conviction of the sacredness of marriage that guarded me; it was not pride; it was, although I knew it not, a deep, bitter grudge against fate which had denied me my happiness—that happiness of which I had dreamed. It was, in a word, the recollection of that great passion which filled my soul in my dreams at night, so that I saw my daily waking life only through its magic veil—the love which, unknown to myself, still filled my heart, like the aroma of attar of roses, which long after it is gone scents the crystal phial which it once filled.

"I discovered this when it was too late—when I had seen him again. It was not my fault. I had learnt from an apparently unquestionable source that he had for some years held an important post in South America, and that he was at that moment in the far West, on the shores of the Pacific Ocean. A command from the Pope—or, as he said, his star—had brought him back. You will believe me, Elsa, that I speak the truth, that the agreement which it is said we made together was an invention; it is further said

that I, whether by agreement or by chance, seized the cleverly-arranged or unhoped-for happiness with eager hands, and drank it down greedily.

"And I?

"I went that same evening on which we had met Giraldi at an entertainment at the French Ambassador's to my husband, and told him that I wished to return home—the next day. He had given no reason when he threw up his post and brought me here into this solitude, and I thought I might also keep silence on the reasons which took me from Rome and the world into solitude. Neither did he inquire. He had already seen—had, like all the world, perceived the extraordinary charm which was even more remarkable in the man who had ripened to such splendid maturity under a tropical sun, than in the fascinating youth of former days; he probably remembered what kind friends then no doubt had told him, and what in his pride and self-confidence he had certainly not believed. And now this confidence was not broken; but it was shaken. The past years, so empty and joyless, stood out before his startled eyes in a strange and suspicious light. All I had suffered and been deprived of must have come before him. But it was still not

too late, in his eyes. I wished to do my duty apparently by flying from temptation. He accepted silently what in his opinion was a matter of course. We left the next morning, and went home.

"And now commenced a dark and fearful drama which I shudder to look upon, even now that the entangled threads have become clear before my eyes. We had curiously changed our parts. Whilst I, proud of the victory I had obtained over myself, held my head up and took a melancholy pleasure in the renunciation to which I doomed myself, he suffered more and more from the disquietude which had until now possessed me; he was tortured by longings after a happiness which I had resigned. He had married me because I was young, handsome, and brilliant; perhaps had also fancied at the time that he loved me, after his fashion. Now he loved me for the first time with all the passion of which he was capable, and which must be the more fatal to him, that he, to whom a calm bearing had always been the ideal of a gentleman, was ashamed of his passion, and would certainly give no expression to it; and, what was worse than all, he must see, or fancy he saw, that he was too late in treading the path which led to my heart—which

perhaps even now would have led to it. It is so hard for a woman to shut her heart against the charm which the knowledge that she is loved sheds around her. I saw how he suffered. I suffered terribly under it; for I held it to be impossible that I could ever return his sentiments; yet I suffered with him, and pity is so near akin to love! If children had played around us, perhaps everything would have happened differently, and I truly believe that their gracious influence at this stage of our affairs would have brought about a happier ending. But as it was, the reckoning was not between father and mother, but always between man and wife, and childless marriages are only too fruitful a source of sorrowful home tragedies. And yet all would have gone, if not well, at least better in time, which gradually buries so many raging flames under its embers, had not my husband been taken possession of by an unlucky thought, which became a fixed idea. What had appeared to him, so long as he had not loved me, as a piece of wisdom and diplomatic reserve—namely, our leaving Rome—now appeared to him in the light of a shameful flight, a miserable cowardice, which he could never forgive himself, which I could never forgive him, and which, infatuated as

he was, he now held to be the principal—the only reason, indeed—that I remained cold to him, whilst he was consumed with love. He could not, as usual, find any soothing, explanatory words for the agitated condition of his heart.

"I should be in the dark now as to this portion of my unhappy history had I not learnt the real circumstances from letters of your father, which my husband on his second departure from Rome left in his desk, and which afterwards were found by Giraldi and shown to me. It appeared from these letters that my husband confided everything to his friend, and had begged his advice especially with respect to the fatal plan with which he deluded himself. Your father advised most strongly against it; not that he doubted that I should be victorious in the struggle to which I was to be exposed—a Werben would always, and in all circumstances, do her duty—but because he took the whole thing for a romance, that might do very well in a French play, but was altogether out of place in the realities of German life, and particularly in the case of a German nobleman and his wife. If we had not found happiness in our marriage, he certainly deplored it with all his heart; but he knew of

no other remedy than the determination not to depart from the good and right course; and should this means prove unavailing, there was nothing for a man to do but to accept in all humility the fate which he had assuredly prepared for himself, and bear it with dignity as inevitable. We were not sent on earth to be happy, but to do our duty.

"Oh, Elsa! with what sensations did I at that time read this letter, which I took to be the perfect expression of a mind which had forgotten all human emotions in the formalities of the service, and which revolted me the more as I had clung to him who could so write with true sisterly love, and believed myself beloved by him as by a brother. What terrible experiences were needed before I understood what great though bitter wisdom, and how much true love, was in these words!

"A second journey to Rome was announced to me, like all these resolutions, in the most courteous manner, but with a tacit assumption of my assent. It was not my fault that I also had meanwhile learnt to conceal my feelings. In the company of taciturn people even sympathetic minds become silenced at last, and then for ever. I saw beforehand what would happen—yes, I was determined that it should happen. I have not concealed

from you the frivolous levity with which I approached the altar. The evil disposition of my young and half-corrupted heart had not been fulfilled. I had continued a better woman than I had believed myself—yes, I may say I had grown better in time. Now that all my honest efforts were fruitless, that I knew them to be slighted and misunderstood, that I saw fate insolently challenged by the man who should have been grateful to me for having preserved myself and him from it by such great sacrifices of my own heart—now I became worse than I had ever been—now I became truly bad. I scoffed in my inmost heart at the madman who strove to gather grapes from thorns; I secretly derided the vain fool who could imagine for a moment that he could prevail in the struggle with the noblest of mankind; I triumphed beforehand over his downfall.

"It is terrible to have to say all this to you; all the more terrible as it did not remain the mere fancy of a distorted imagination, but was all, all most horribly fulfilled."

Valerie, who sat crouched up on the sofa, hid her face shuddering in her hands. A cold shiver ran through her slender form. Elsa would willingly have begged her to leave off for that day, but she felt that she could

not take the bitter cup from the lips of the unhappy woman, to whom it gave one drop of comfort that a sympathising human eye should at last look down into the depths of her misery.

She comforted her with tender words, gave her a glass of water, which the exhausted woman hastily drank with feverish lips, and then again seized Elsa's hand, which she had all along held tightly in hers, and went on with her sorrowful confession, whilst the storm howled without like a band of demons whose victim was trying to escape them from the gates of hell.

"Alas that I cannot relate further without offending your pure ears, as I have already troubled your pure mind. But it must be. What is bad cannot be expressed in good words; and from the moment when I again touched Rome's venerable soil everything in my life was for long, endless years soiled and tainted, until at last I looked almost with envy upon the poor women in the streets. I was in the hands of one who seemed to have risen from the bottomless pit to destroy both body and soul. And yet it was years and years before this knowledge began to dawn upon me; years before the abhorrence grew into secret rebellion, and if this rebellion ex-

presses itself in action, as I hope and pray to God it may, it is you, you only, I have to thank. I owe it to the new life that I have drunk from your loving looks, to the courage with which your strong, noble love has inspired me, which without neglecting one single duty, has looked steadfastly through all impediments to its one lofty star. I owe it to my longing to win your love, to be worthy of it as far as lies within my power, as far as the deepest repentance may expiate the heaviest guilt. I might call it a sudden insanity that threw me into the arms of this terrible man, in other words, that brought me to my ruin; and many things conspired together, too, to dull my feelings and judgment; the long torture which I had borne, and borne in vain, the violence with which I had been torn from such a hard-won act of resignation, the madness of a passion which, after having so long been forcibly restrained, now overflowed all barriers; the unholy charm which guilt offers to an undisciplined mind! How many have fallen who had not such temptations! But that this insanity lasted so long! that I should have known I was mad! that I chose to be so! It all appears to me now like a dark dream, in spite of the golden sun of Italy which illuminated it, of the perfume of orange

blossom which surrounded it, and of the gentle tides of the blue sea which flowed about it. My husband had, after a few months, given up the futile struggle; he had gone away, beaten, broken down, without even the strength to come to any decision, only giving me permission in writing to remain away as long as I pleased. Whether he hoped that this apparent magnanimity would touch me, or that his absence would appeal more strongly to my heart than his presence, that the separation would teach me what I might lose in him —what I had already lost—I do not know. I only know that I had nothing but scorn and derision for what I called his pitiful flight, without a shadow of pity for him, even if I thought of him at all, or of anything but of enjoying my freedom to its fullest extent. And had I wished to follow him, as I did not wish, I could not have done so. Even before he fled I was fettered to him from whom he fled, by the strongest chains by which a woman can be bound to the man of her choice. But what so often brings about a transformation in a woman's life, what leads even the most frivolous to reflection, and awakens in her nobler feelings, brought no repentance to me, even—terrible to say—no joy. I needed no pledge of his love; and it brought to him

whose path I would have strewn with roses, only care and perplexity.

"He had had no trouble in convincing me that my condition must remain a profound secret to all the world. Our hope was that my husband would himself insist upon a divorce, and as we—thanks to the devilish ingenuity of that fearful man—had never openly violated public decorum, as my husband had gone of his own free will, he leaving me, not I him, the separation could only terminate in my—that is in our—favour. Our fates were now irrevocably joined.

"And now came a circumstance which—Oh, Elsa! Elsa! have pity on me! How can I tell you? We reckoned on, we hoped for, my husband's death. From Giraldi's spies—he has them all over the world—we heard that my husband was ill, then that his illness was taking a serious turn, at last that the 'doctors gave no hope, even if the end did not come immediately. We tremblingly awaited the messenger who should summon me to his sick-bed; we thought over what excuses I should make if I did not obey the call; but the messenger never came. But neither did that come for which we waited in more intense suspense, as my time drew ever nearer. Though indeed we should not have

been easily found. We had hidden ourselves deep in the mountains in a lonely place between Amalfi and Salerno. My old Feldner was our only companion. The loveliest boy was born, and as soon as I was able to move, was left in the hands of the faithful woman. It was necessary again to show myself before the world, and talk in the drawing-rooms of Naples about Sicily, through which we had hurriedly passed, and where I was supposed to have spent the last few months. And not one pang of remorse, not one wish to hear of or see the innocent child, left up in the mountains! To say that I was mad is perhaps the right word!

"But my husband still lived, and news came from Feldner that travellers—acquaintances of ours—had passed through her mountain retreat, and that she had only escaped discovery by the merest chance. The faithful soul begged us to liberate her and the child from their isolation. She asked if I did not wish to see the dear little creature again. A queen would be proud of such a child!

"Intoxicated though I was with the poisonous draught of sinful passion which none knew better than he how to mix, the cry for help from the faithful woman pierced my obdurate heart. I wanted to see my

child; I wanted to have it with me. It was needed to fulfil my happiness. Nothing short of a full, even overflowing happiness would now content me. He had to bring all the force of his powers of persuasion to keep me from a step which he assured me would overthrow all our carefully-arranged plans. 'And if you do not consider yourself,' he cried, 'whom such an open admission of your position would reduce to beggary, think of our son, who would become a beggar with you. His future depends upon our caution, our foresight, our prudence; but prudence enjoins us to leave him in concealment until everything is decided, even, as his present place of abode has been shown not to afford sufficient security, to remove him to deeper concealment. It is only a question of a short time, of a few weeks, perhaps days. Trust me in this, as you have hitherto trusted me in all things. Leave it to me; I have already considered and prepared everything.'

"He communicated his plan to me. We had visited Pœstum in the spring. The young and handsome guide who had conducted us over the ruins had left an agreeable impression on my mind, as well as the plump little wife whom he had lately brought home there. I had envied both these poor people their

unconcealed happiness. 'Those are the people,' said Giraldi, 'to whom to entrust our Cesare. The young wife will think but little of such an addition to her cares, and the strong husband will be an admirable protector to the child. Moreover, the presence of a detachment of soldiers at Pœstum is sufficient to ensure his safety.' He silenced my doubts, set aside every objection, and went to carry out his plan—alone. I dared not at this moment, when a thousand suspicious eyes watched us, when we were assuredly surrounded by invisible spies, leave the town on any account.

"He was back by the evening of the next day. All had gone perfectly as arranged. The child was well; the good Panaris (that was the name of the guide) full of joy over the treasure confided to them, which to these poor people became naturally a real treasure.

"Quite different indeed was the account of Feldner, who had accompanied him on the expedition. She painted with the utmost horror the wilds they had passed through, and over whose burnt-up surface malaria breathed its poison, and the pale, fever-stricken countenances of the poor inhabitants in the ruinous, dirty huts. The Panaris, too, had been ready enough to undertake the

charge of the child, but the man was not without many doubts, which he had secretly imparted to her. The brigands were just then gathered in unwonted force in the mountains, and in spite of the soldiers posted in various places, and of the military escorts which accompanied travellers from Salerno or Battipaglia to Pœstum, robberies had taken place in the immediate neighbourhood of the ruins. He could the less answer absolutely for the safety of the child, as he was himself never for a moment sure that his own property, perhaps even his own life, was safe.

"Unfortunately, out of fear of Giraldi, Feldner only let out these warnings gradually and cautiously. I myself, who had only been to Pœstum in the spring, and seen the broad plains covered with tender green, and gleaming in the mildest sunshine, naturally looked upon one cause of this anxiety as exaggerated, and Giraldi laughed to scorn the other objections. 'At the worst,' he said, 'it is an attempt on the part of the Panaris to get higher pay, which moreover I am quite willing to give them; and do you buy a silk dress and a coral ornament from the Chiaja for your duenna, that is all she wants. Only patience for a few days!'

"And as if fate itself were bound to serve him, a few days later news came that my husband had breathed his last here in Warnow, and with the announcement of his death came a copy of his will.

"I was distracted; I could have wished the world to come to an end, when all the happiness for which I had hoped, in which I had already revelled, lay shattered before me. I swear to you, it is the one bright spot in the infernal darkness of my unhappy soul that I never thought of myself. I lived only for him, lied for him, intrigued for him, stifled the voice of nature for him. I would have lived in a hovel with him, and in the sweat of my brow worked for the daily bread of us both. I would—but let me keep silence upon what I would have done for him—the infamy is too great as it is.

"He smiled his sarcastic smile. He did not believe in love in a cottage. My husband's disbelief in all unselfish sentiments had revolted me; here I only saw the right to a demand which so finely-organised a nature made upon life; nay, must make if it would not lose any of the charm which surrounded it. But if the will forbade me, under penalty of disinheritance, to call the man I loved my husband before all the world, there was no

such penalty attached to a shame of which he had never thought, it did not forbid me to recognise my child. I would have my child at once. I had so much at least to retrieve.

"Now, I cried, that we are denied the luxury of a legitimate position, now that we are driven back to the sources from which we have drawn so deeply without asking anyone's permission —to nature and love—not one link shall fail of the chain which nature and love can forge; now for the first time I feel how only the pledge of our love can make our bond complete and indestructible. Let us not lose one moment.

"A feverish impatience had taken possession of me, which he—and oh! how thankful I was to him—appeared fully to share. I see him now, pale and disturbed, pacing through the room, and then standing still and spurring on Feldner, who in the hurry could not collect the child's things, and myself even to greater haste.

"'We do not want to lose a moment,' he cried, 'and we are losing hours, which are perhaps irretrievable.'

"We were getting into the carriage (there was no railway then), which would take us by Battipaglia to Pœstum, when an old woman, who had been crouched on the steps

of the hotel, hobbled up, and in the cool way of a Neapolitan beggar, pulled him back by the tail of his coat, just as he had his foot on the step.

"He turned unwillingly, and—I have tried a thousand times in vain to recall the particulars of this scene—Feldner and I must have been just then arranging ourselves in the carriage. I only know that when I looked round at him the old woman was disappearing round the corner of the hotel, with greater activity than I should have given her credit for, whilst he, with his back to us, was standing in the entrance of the hotel apparently reading a letter. He then came out again. 'I had another direction to give to the porter,' he said, as he sat down by us and pressed my hand with a smile, saying, '*Coraggio, anima mia! coraggio!*'

"'*Coraggio!*' I answered tenderly, returning the pressure. His face was so pale, his eyes looked so gloomy, that he seemed to me to need more encouragement than I did.

"It was evening before we reached Battipaglia. The little place, from which travellers over the lonely plain were in the habit of taking their military escort, was in great excitement. A company of Bersaglieri had just marched hastily through, a second com-

pany was on its way from Salerno to Pœstum, a third was lying in wait for the robbers in the mountains. Such a measure had become really necessary. The robbers had swarmed before the very gates of Salerno, and for days past no one could venture out of Battipaglia into the country. From Pœstum no news had come for the same time, and the worst was feared for the poor dwellers there.

"An inexpressible terror came over me. The unhappy child in the midst of this universal distress, in the very centre of the horrors! It was in vain now that Giraldi attempted to calm me by arguing that the approach of the troops gave promise of safety; I would not, I could not listen to anything; I could say nothing but 'On! on!'

"The people said we should not get far, and in fact we had scarcely gone a mile before we came up with a large body of soldiers, whose young officer courteously but decidedly ordered us back. The carriage had passed the lines against the distinct order of the colonel, and we could go no farther, as the banditti had rendered the bridge over the Sele impracticable for carriages and horses; very likely at this moment there was fighting in the open field before Pœstum. To-morrow the roads would be safer than they had ever

been before; we must have patience so long.

"No prayers, no supplications availed. Back to Battipaglia! The impossibility of reaching the child, the fear of losing it, perhaps of having already lost it, drove me almost frantic. For the first time Giraldi had lost his power over me. He left me to my despair in the miserable inn and wandered about out of doors. It was a fearful night!

"The next morning the roads were, as the officer had promised, free. He thought it his duty to bring us the news himself, advising us, however, to postpone to another time our romantic trip. We had wanted to see Pœstum yesterday by moonlight! Good God! It looked melancholy in Pœstum. The little hotel was a ruin, the house of the guide Panari destroyed, he himself dangerously wounded in the defence of a strange child, which had been entrusted to him, and which the banditti had carried off to the mountains. This had taken place unfortunately the evening before last, so that the robbers had had time to convey to a place of safety their prey, on which indeed they must set great store, as they had made the most tremendous efforts to attain it, and had put themselves in such evident danger to place it in safety. There

was, however, still a hope of snatching their prey from them. The pursuit was hot, and the precautionary measures well laid out. The lady might for the present calm her compassionate heart, and moreover, even if the child were to be pitied, the unnatural parents who had placed their child in such danger deserved no pity. Who could tell that they had not themselves planned the robbery, the better to hide the living witness of their shame, and that the pursuit of their accomplices was more than inconvenient to them? Such things had happened before.

"Oh! Elsa! Elsa! when the young man spoke these words so unsuspiciously, I did not venture to look up for shame and horror; I had provoked this fate. I 'deserved no pity!' and yet—and yet——

"But there was yet a possibility of escaping from this hell of anguish. Bandits were almost daily brought in—men, women, and children! 'It is not our Cesare,' said Feldner. I—— Good God! I should not have known with certainty if it were my child. Feldner cried quietly to herself night after night, that she had been robbed of her heart's-blood, her sweet little Cesare. I forbade her to cry. I threatened to dismiss her. I would not endure that he who appeared to suffer so

terribly under the blow should be still further distressed by her complaints. He had in no way given up hope; prisoners had reported that a certain Lazzaro Cecutti, one of their principal leaders, who had for reasons unknown to them conducted the actual robbery of the child, with two others who had fallen in the fight, and his mother, with whom he had sent the child into the mountains, could alone give any information as to the destination of the same. Why should not Lazzaro or old Barbara be taken prisoners, like so many others? But they were not taken.

"'They are too cunning,' said Giraldi; 'they will not let themselves be taken; but when the pursuit is over, and that will soon be, the ardour of our authorities dies quickly, they will emerge in some distant spot and demand the ransom, which is naturally the only thing they care for; and on that very account we may be easy about our child, they will treasure it as the apple of their eye. Everything for them depends upon the child.'

"'But how will they find us?' I asked; 'we who by your direction have never openly claimed the child, have never offered a reward for his restoration?'

"'Those are measures,' said Giraldi, 'which would only have drawn upon us the attention

of the public and the officials; that is to say, would have made it more difficult for the robbers to come to us unnoticed. You do not know either the loquacity or the cunning of my country people. The Panaris have assuredly not kept their counsel, and Lazzaro, before he achieved the robbery, knew our address better even than the police authorities; and when Italian bandits want to get a ransom they can find their men, wherever they may be. And believe me, they will find us.'

"The pursuit came to an end, very quickly too, astonishingly so, the papers said. It was at an end, but Lazzaro and his mother appeared neither here nor elsewhere. No one talked any more about the affair, it was buried in profound silence; the silence of death! Lazzaro was dead—he must be dead—he and his mother, and—my child! They, wounded to the death, drawing out their last breath in some deep and lonely mountain glen; the child, whom they no doubt kept with them to the end, hungry and thirsty, perishing miserably.

"Giraldi himself had to give it up at last. Heaven, he trusted, would send compensation. But Heaven, who had seen our firstborn given over to be a prey to the fox and the

eagle, would not confide a second to such unnatural parents. The one so ruthlessly sacrificed remained the only one.

"And here I anticipate my narrative by years, in saying, that I thank God it remained the only one. More, I shudder at the thought that this child of sin and shame may still be living, may one day step out from the darkness which has so long enveloped him, may appear before me and say, 'Here I am; Cesare, your son.' Oh! Elsa, Elsa, everything is crushed and destroyed in me. How can my feelings be simple and natural like other people's? How can I do other than shudder at the possibility of finding him again when I think to myself how I must find him, who has grown up amongst robbers and murderers? in whom I have no share, save that I bore him, in whose soul I have no part? The son who would only come to help his father to rivet again the worn-out chain at the very time when I was in the act of breaking the last link? He feels and knows this. And it is by no chance, therefore, that he now, at this very time, has again and again conjured up that terrible picture—ah! no one understands as he does that devilish art!—Cesare is not dead. Cesare lives; wandering about the world in lowly guise,

shortly to throw off the peasant dress and stand before us in his bright beauty.

"And I am to believe him—I, who have long been convinced, with my faithful Feldner, that what the young officer had thrown out as conjecture and possibility, with soldierly bluntness, was the terrible truth. He had taken the unhappy child to the foot of the mountains in the wilds of Pœstum, from whose barren slopes the robbers descend on to the plain, that he might be carried off at any time, that is, as soon as I showed a serious intention of producing him before the world, before the right time came. He—he himself had thrown the prey to these villains. He had learnt from the woman who came to the carriage-door that the villainous plot was carried into execution, at the moment when he would have given anything not to have contrived it. And then it unfortunately happened that at that very time the raid against the robbers was taken in hand by the Government, but at any rate the crime remained undiscovered; he could still raise his insolent eyes to mine as before.

"It is terrible to have to relate this, and to feel that though it was years and years before my blindness was in some measure removed, and I began to estimate the depth of my

misery, I still endured it so long. But however slight the bond that unites bad men, that between a thoroughly bad man and one who is not utterly lost to nobler impulses is almost unbreakable, especially when that other is a woman. If she has repented her sinful life, and would turn with horror and aversion from her destroyer, fear prevents it; and if fear is forgotten in the excess of sorrow, she is bound once more and for ever by the shame of having to confess that she has so long been the companion of the reprobate.

"Oh, Elsa! I have gone through all these horrible phases. I thank heaven and you, whom heaven has sent to me, that at last I have come to the end.

"When we came here in the autumn, my soul was filled with terror, like a criminal who has escaped with noiseless tread from his prison, and is terrified at the trembling of a leaf. I knew that the crisis was approaching on all sides, that a word, a look, might betray me, the more so that suspicion had certainly been roused in him. A sure sign of this was that he no longer trusted his accomplices. All our servants have always been such. Even my old Feldner had long been in his pay—apparently. She takes the wages of sin,

with which he pays her betrayal of her mistress, and we give it to the poor. She says nothing to him but what we have agreed upon beforehand. But since we have been here, he no longer employs her. He must even have begun to suspect François, a crafty bad man, who had at first promised to be a particularly useful tool, and rightly. Whether Giraldi has offended him, or the clever Feldner has won him over, he has come over to us. But he also has no longer anything to tell. It seems that his last commission, to accompany and watch me here, was only a pretext to get him away from Berlin, where Giraldi is weaving the last meshes of his net. Let him. I fear him and his devilish arts no longer, now that an angel has spread its pure wings over me.

"He has long lied to me as he has to all the world. The last time that he divulged his plans to me, and then only in part, was on the morning after my arrival in Berlin, a few minutes before I saw your dear face for the first time. I may not, and will not importune you with the repulsive details; it is enough for you to know, that with the courage to oppose him, I have also the power to frustrate his plans.

"The net, into the toils of which he thinks

to bring you, will close around his own guilty head. When he comes to me to-morrow, sneering at the intelligence which the Count and Carla will hasten to impart to him, that Elsa von Werben has forfeited her inheritance, he shall have his answer, and if he announces in triumph that Ottomar has also returned to his forsaken love, and equally forfeits his inheritance, he shall not long await his answer; and if with lips trembling with passion he asks how I, his tool, his slave, have dared to rebel against my lord and master, I will seize you by the hand and say, 'Away from me, tempter! back into the darkness of your hell, Satan! before this angel of light!'"

With the last words, Valerie had slipped from the sofa to Elsa's feet, her weeping face hidden in her lap, and kissing her hands and dress in an excess of agitation, which only too clearly proved what terrible anguish the dreadful confession had cost her, with what rapture her poor heart, which so thirsted for comfort, was now filled. It was long before Elsa could in any degree calm her, only at last through the consideration that she must gather up all her strength for the interview with Giraldi next day, and that a few hours' sleep after such a day was indispensable.

She would remain with her. She must allow her good angel to watch even over her slumbers.

She got the exhausted, broken-down woman to bed. It was long before her quicker breathing showed that Nature had asserted her rights. But at last she lay really asleep. Elsa sat by the bed, and gazed with deep sympathy upon that still lovely, noble, deathly-white face.

And then she thought of him whose image during her aunt's story had ever stood out in her mind, as if it were to him and not to her that the confession was being made. As if he and not she had here to decide, to judge, and to absolve. And as another tremendous clap of thunder now shook the old castle, and the sleeper moaned in terror, she folded her hands, not in fear, but in thankful emotion that whilst her lover was risking his dear life to save the lives of others, she was also permitted to pilot a human soul out of the storm of passion and sin into the haven of love, and that their works of salvation would succeed for the sake of their mutual love.

CHAPTER V.

THE storm was raging that night through the straight streets of Berlin also.

Let it! What does one more discomfort signify to us, as we hurry along the pavement? We are accustomed to discomforts of every sort; and if a tile or a slate falls down occasionally at our feet, we have not been struck yet, thank goodness! And if a chimney should be blown down, or a new house fall in, or anything of that sort, we shall read about it in the papers to-morrow. We have weightier matters to consider, truly! The storm which raged through the Chambers to-day during the debates, will also unroof many a fine edifice on the Stock Exchange in quite another fashion, and many a great house which appeared this morning to stand firm enough, and command the market, will

be shattered to its foundations, and will drag others down with it to disgraceful failure. Like this one here for instance; it is just finished after years of labour, having cost untold sums, and its magnificence having roused the astonishment of everybody who was favoured with a view of it, and the eager curiosity of the many who were obliged to content themselves with a sight of the lofty scaffolding. Was it not to be opened to-night with a great ball, of which for the last fortnight such wonders have been related? To be sure! And it is really a curious coincidence that it should take place just to-day, when the lightning has struck the neighbouring houses, that stand upon the same insecure foundations, have been erected from the same disgraceful materials, and are in every respect the same miserable swindle from basement to roof. I should not like to stand in that man's shoes.

Nor I either, my dear friend, but, believe me, our virtuous indignation, if he could be aware of it, would only be an additional satisfaction to this man. He has landed his goods in safety. What does it matter to him if you, or I, or anybody be drowned in the rushing stream from which there is no escape except for him and such as him? Who asked us to

venture into the water? You thought, perhaps, that if he were not prevented from giving this feast by the black Care that sits behind him, he must be so by very shame, especially to-day when he and the whole brood of them have been branded with the mark of Cain upon their brows. And now look! look up at this splendid façade, see how the light from the innumerable wax candles streams through the great plate-glass windows, with their crimson silk hangings, and shines like daylight upon us out here in the dark! No contemptible gas except in the passages and corridors! That is how it is in the Emperor's palace, and he must have the same. That splendid awning before the door, which is being blown about by the wind, the Brussels carpet which is laid in the dirt of the street from the door to the carriages, will be thrown into the dust-hole to-morrow in rags and tatters. Why not? That is what they are for. But come—the police are already beginning to look indignantly at us. They suspect our wicked doubts about the sacred rights of order, which consist in plate-glass windows, marble doorways, fringed awnings, and Brussels carpets. Or have you got a card of invitation like Justus Anders there, who is lost in wonder over the varnished

boots which so seldom deck his feet, and is in trouble about his new hat, with handsome Antonio following as his aide-de-camp, hastening in without noticing us his best friends; but do not look morosely at him, and hurl no anathemas at him out of the depths of your injured, democratic conscience. The poet is the equal of the king, and the artist must be the equal of the speculator. Those are laws which we must respect. And now let us go and drink a glass to Lasker's health. Only this one more carriage? Oh! you rogue! because there are ladies' dresses—it serves you right! Old Kniebreche. *Sauve qui peut!*

The old Baroness was of course there. She was everywhere, it was said, where anything was to be seen. She had been present at the creation of the world, and would assist at its end. She had first intended to let Ottomar get her an invitation, but eventually entrusted the honour to Herr von Wallbach. The dissension between the Werbens and the Wallbachs was no longer a secret, at least from her. Dear Giraldi, who was, however, discretion itself, and really only repeated what could absolutely no longer be concealed, had told her something—too terrible, but still not so terrible as what that good Wallbach, who

had fetched her in his carriage, had related to her on the way.

"Poor, poor Carla! Absolutely deserted on account of a pretty girl of no family, whom his former mistress had had to intercede with for him. Wallbach was going to show her at this very ball the principal performer in this pretty story, a dancer from an obscure theatre. Wallbach must be sure to remember! She was so curious to see this person. In such an utter scandal, it was impossible to be too careful about the most trifling details. And if dear Carla had tried to comfort herself in her grief —of course, my dear Wallbach, what was she to do? It speaks for itself. And she had the dear Count there under her very hand! *Oh! Mon Dieu!* How I have been deceived in Ottomar, but they have, none of them, been good for anything. I knew his grandfather, and even saw his great grandfather when I was a little girl. But the old gentleman would turn in his grave if he knew what his great-grandchildren were doing. And Elsa—my dear Wallbach, I suppose I must believe that story, but it is a strong measure for a General's daughter. As to Ottomar drawing lots of bills of exchange—I know whole regiments who do

it; but there I stop—further than that I cannot go, unless I heard it from his own lips."

"But, my dear lady, I conjure you by all that is sacred, be discreet."

"Do you take me for a baby—for a goose, for I don't know what? You have no business to talk like that to old Kniebreche, who might be your grandmother. Give me your arm, and point out a few interesting people. Will Lasker be here, too? What do you say? One ought not to talk of the hangman —What is it to me if tag and rag fall out together? But our worthy host—do point him out to me—the big, broad-shouldered man with the fine forehead and full chin? A fine-looking man. Bring him to me at once!"

Philip was charmed, at last and in his own house, to become personally acquainted with a lady who was reckoned amongst the few celebrities in which Berlin rejoices. Now, for the first time, he could venture to say that his entertainment had not proved a failure. Would her ladyship allow him the honour of conducting her to the ball-room? Unfortunately he had not been able to restrain any longer the young people's desire to begin dancing, or he would certainly have asked

her ladyship to have led the polonaise with him. He flattered himself that she would not feel herself too isolated at his house, though several illustrious names would not appear in the list of those present; as, for instance, that of Count Golm. One could not have everything and everybody at once. He was, and always had been, a modest man; and that "a king's glory was his state, and our glory was the labour of our hands," was a saying which he had, all his life, held to, and hoped to continue to do so. Were the pillars which supported the orchestra real marble? Certainly. He was the son of a worker in marble. He might say that everything her ladyship saw here was real, save, perhaps, a little of the colour on the ladies' cheeks, about which, for his part, he had secret doubts; and the nobility of a few barons and baronesses, which might also seem a little doubtful to her ladyship. The Stock Exchange seemed nowadays to be all-powerful, but after all, however long the train might be, and whatever quantity of diamonds were worn in the hair, or sewn on the dress, what a difference there was between Baroness Kniebreche and Baroness—— He would name no names, but a difference there must always be. Would her ladyship permit him

to offer her some refreshments? they were here close by.

"Quite a presentable man for a parvenu," whispered Baroness Kniebreche into the ear of Baroness von Holzweg, whom she met in the refreshment-room in the midst of a group of great ladies. "He understands the art of living, it must be allowed. There is not a more magnificent room in Berlin, even at his Majesty's, only here it is much more comfortable. What a capital idea to put a refreshment-room so close to the ball-room, and such good things too. What have you got there, my dear? Oyster patties? Delicious! Young man, bring some oyster patties and a glass of Chateau Yquem. How well that sort of man understands bringing people together. Of course there are all the tag and rag here—actors, dancers, heaven knows what! But if one does not look too closely one might imagine oneself at a court ball. The ball-room absolutely swarms with guardsmen. Well, young people, I cannot blame you; you are cocks of the walk here. *À propos*, what brought you here, dear Baroness?"

"Quite between ourselves, dear Baroness," whispered Baroness Holzweg.

"Of course between ourselves!" cried Baroness Kniebreche.

"Prince Wladimir is expected to be here for a moment."

"You don't say so! Of course you and your niece could not fail. But take care! The 'illustrious lovers' are getting quite common. Come, come, I meant no harm; I readily allow the greatest latitude in the upper circles, if only the proprieties are observed as regards the lower ranks. But such things are going on now, dear Baroness—such things!"

And Baroness Kniebreche began waving her gigantic fan with much energy.

"May I venture to ask, dear Baroness?" whispered Baroness Holzweg, drawing nearer, in curiosity.

"Well, quite between ourselves, you know, dear Baroness."

"How can you imagine, dear Baroness—"

The heads of the two old ladies disappeared for a long time behind the black fan.

"And these are all facts, dear Baroness?"

"Absolute facts. I have them from Wallbach, who is generally discretion itself—but there are limits to everything. Is not that him there behind the door? Actually! and talking to Signor Giraldi. I must go there. That good man absolutely hears the grass grow."

The old lady got up with difficulty, and rustled off, with her glass to her half-blind eyes, towards the two gentlemen, every one retreating, scared, before the black fan.

Baroness Holzweg remained sitting, with an evil smile upon her pale, puffy face.

"Ah!" she murmured, "how pleased Agnes will be. The haughty Herr von Werben, who will not dance with her, because he can understand either secret or open engagements, but not those that cannot be made public! And his arrogant sister, whom he has forbidden to have anything to do with Agnes, and who has now taken up with a merchant-captain. Charming!"

"What is amusing you so, my dear?" asked Frau von Pusterhausen, coming back again to her friend. You were talking such secrets with Baroness Kniebreche, and I could not get away from Madame Veitel, or whatever she calls herself. She chatters and chatters —I only heard a few words—you seemed to be talking about the Werbens? Am I right? And can you tell me what it was about?"

"But it remains between ourselves, my dear?"

"You may be quite easy, my dear."

And the two ladies put their heads together,

one maliciously listening, the other spitefully retailing what she had herself just heard.

Giraldi, after he had wandered through the rooms for half an hour, met Herr von Wallbach, who had luckily got away from the Baroness.

"I was just going," he said; "the heat, the noise, the everlasting talk about Lasker——"

Herr von Wallbach passed his hand over his bald forehead with a gentle sigh. "To be sure," he said, "Lasker! it is a terrible blow. Such a splendid business. We shall never recover the blow, although he has not directly attacked us. It is the beginning of the end, believe me."

"I do not think it looks so bad," said Giraldi. "It is only the first shock; our Ministers have certainly behaved miserably, the mob will triumph, but the reaction cannot be long in coming. They will find that the sun of radicalism, which shines so brightly just now, is itself not without a flaw. The Government, if only to anger the opposition, will guarantee the interest for a sufficient loan for a time, and probably afterwards take over the whole business. The promoters must have acted worse than stupidly if a good slice does not fall to their share, amongst others to our friend the Count."

"Nevertheless we—I mean the Warnow trustees—may have to wait a long time for the payment of the second instalment," said Herr von Wallbach thoughtfully.

"I am certain of that," answered Giraldi. "You may thank your forbearance, which has lasted until the shares with which you paid him have gone down so far. If I had only been listened to, he must have paid the whole million at once, when the shares stood at seventy-five; it would have been possible, and he would still have retained nearly half a million."

"Yes, true," said Herr von Wallbach, "it has again been proved that you are the best financier amongst us. It is lucky that we got the first instalment. The money, if all happens as you say, is as good as the Baroness's property already; but, nevertheless, we must one of these days—I wanted to remind you of that—meet once more, as a matter of form, to receive your report. You have still got the money at Haselow's?"

"Where else?"

"I only mention it because we left the investment absolutely to you. I wish to heaven the time had already come when I was quit of the whole thing. At any rate I shall make Schieler represent me at the trustees' meeting.

When a man is on the point of breaking with the son, he cannot very well be on friendly terms with the father."

"Pay Ottomar's bills to-morrow; close one eye to certain mistakes in the signatures which must be amongst them—how should he have managed otherwise?—shut the other to the fair Ferdinanda, and everything remains as it was."

"Do not joke about it. At the best there will be a fearful scandal."

"Better too early than too late. And besides, if the public hear of the new engagement at the same time that they hear of the breaking off of the other, all will be well again."

Herr von Wallbach looked very thoughtful.

"Since this morning, since that terrible speech," he said, "the Count's position has become much worse. I don't know what will become of him now."

"Pardon me," answered Giraldi; "to my mind the affair looks quite different. The respite is an immense gain for the Count. There are so many chances. The shares may go up again, or the powerful hand which enabled him to pay the first instalment may be held out to him again. If it is not, why, the trustees must agree to a compromise—say

twenty-five per cent. off; that is to say, the Count can pay up seventy-five. And after all he has always got the entailed estates."

"True, true," said Herr von Wallbach; "that would always remain to him."

He passed his hand over his forehead.

"Have you seen Werben yet?"

"He will hardly come. He is more agreeably employed. Bertalda has again lent her house to the loving couple, and is dancing away the sorrows of her young widowhood. The polka is over. I will beg for a few more details from the communicative little thing, in case they may be of use to you. I shall see you perhaps to-morrow. For to-day, *Addio.*"

Giraldi turned away at the very moment that Baroness Kniebreche came up, and slipped into the ball-room, making as he passed a sign to Bertalda, whom he met on the arm of a very smart officer. Bertalda dismissed her partner, and soon overtook Giraldi, who had passed into one of the less-crowded side-rooms.

"Well?" he asked, sitting down, and inviting Bertalda by a gesture to take a place by him, "did you get the money, child?"

"Yes, and I am extremely obliged to you. I was really in great need of it. My poor brother——"

"I do not want to know what you did with the money. So long as you oblige me, that is sufficient. The important point is, are they happy at last?"

The girl coloured. "I really did my best," she said hesitatingly.

"She never came?" asked Giraldi vehemently.

"Oh yes! I had told her so much about her brother's ball, and——"

"Your dress—and so forth."

"Yes, that also. But it was not needed. I saw in her eyes that she could not hold out any longer, and was delighted that I had given her such a suitable opportunity. She came, too, half an hour before the time, and found everything very charming, just as it was the first time she was there, in November, and helped me to dress, and—well, one knows what it is when a girl, who is really in love, is waiting for her lover. A ring was heard. 'Who can that be?' said I. 'Perhaps it is Herr von Werben,' said Johanna, who naturally knows all about it. 'What brings him here to-day? Perhaps a bouquet; he is always so attentive,' said Johanna. She turned white and red in one moment, and trembled from head to foot, then fell upon my neck and sobbed, 'No, no, I have sworn it;' and before

I could turn round myself, she was out of the room, without hat or cloak, down the stairs, and into the carriage, which was waiting at the door—br-r-r !—and she was gone. Next time she will not run away, I am certain of that."

"Next time," cried Giraldi, with scarcely restrained fury, "as if I could wait a hundred years. I had so set my hopes on it. Made so much of it to him. How did he take it?"

"He was frantic. I had to spend half an hour in consoling him. There never was anything like it. I really think he will do himself a mischief, if he doesn't get the girl. It is no joke, I can tell you, to deal with them both. If I were not so fond of Werben, and so sorry for poor Ferdinanda, I would not do it for all the money in the world."

"Did not he want to come here with you?"

"He is lying full length on my sofa and would listen to nothing. But I think he will come still. An hour or so of that sort of thing gets tiresome, here it is delightful. There is the quadrille beginning, and here comes my partner; may I——"

"Yes, go; and if you see him, tell him that I expect him to-morrow morning between nine and ten. He will know why."

"I have been looking for you everywhere, Fräulein Bertalda."

The black-haired young dandy carried off his charming, tastefully-dressed partner, who smilingly took his arm, blowing a kiss to Giraldi over her shoulder as she went.

Giraldi remained seated. While the stream of gaiety rolled uninterruptedly around him, he could snatch a few minutes to think over his position. It was by no means so prosperous as it had been a few days ago. Since midday he had had to give up all hope of the second instalment upon which he had counted at least in part. He had moreover reckoned with absolute certainty, that to-day the net which he had woven with such untiring perseverance would entangle Ottomar and Ferdinanda. He would have made better use of the interesting facts than Antonio had done about the rendezvous in the park. Ottomar's and Carla's engagement had been the consequence of that—this would have been the cause of the breaking off of that same engagement. Who could now blame Ottomar if, irritated by the girl's absurd prudery, frantic and despairing, he returned to Carla—to Carla, who loved him as much as she was capable of loving any one, and, frivolous as she was, would, for the mere sake of change, turn

back from the new love to the old? And had not his conversation with Herr von Wallbach just now shown him that there were at any rate waverings in that quarter as to whether matters should be allowed to come to extremities? Herr von Wallbach had from the first declared that he did unfortunately share Giraldi's "suspicion" that there had been some ugly circumstances connected with Ottomar's continual drawing of bills of exchange, but that he would never directly interfere upon that point himself. If this suspicion should be justified—possibly at the next final settlement of the trustee business—he should of course be obliged to take notice of it; all the more in proportion to the extent to which the report might already have spread, but still he should only do so to express his sorrow and his conviction that such ugly rumours must disappear as absolutely as they had arisen mysteriously. On the other hand, if any positive proof appeared of the relations that Giraldi maintained still existed between Ottomar and Ferdinanda, he—Wallbach—was quite determined to make the proper use of it on his sister's account, to whom such a rivalry must, in the long run, be disagreeable. But this positive proof was still not procurable. There remained the

affair of the bills of exchange! And if Ottomar came to grief to-morrow? and his proud father took the burden upon himself to avert the fearful disgrace which would recoil upon the whole family? He indeed knew the truth; but could he in that case speak? Would he not have to look on silently, while the father and son settled the matter amicably between them? Twenty thousand thalers indeed would not be so easily procured; but in such a case impossibilities might be overcome, and the General would be sure to have good and powerful friends. At the worst, if Baroness Kniebreche and the others who had been let into the secret should have too completely broken the sacred seal of confidence, there might be two or three duels, which would just suit Ottomar, who had laughingly asserted the other day that he should soon have made up his dozen!

A duel between him and Herr von Wallbach indeed! That would be decisive.

Only Herr von Wallbach, whose nerves were always a little unsteady, was thinking of anything but a duel. How to provoke Ottomar against him?

There would be difficulty about that. It would be necessary to speak more plainly, to mix himself up more directly in the business

than before, and it had been his well-weighed decision not to let the mask fall, until——

The Italian's face grew still darker as he sat there brooding and meditating, his head lightly resting on his gloved right hand, his crush-hat on his knees, while from time to time joyous couples hastened past him to the ball-room, where they were still being summoned to the quadrille, which was more difficult to arrange now on account of the number of dancers.

If Valerie to-morrow, as he still hoped, agreed to everything, as she had always hitherto done, the mine could then, before it was fired, be so deeply laid that not one stone upon another should remain of the edifice of the Werbens' prosperity; the very bones even of the hated race should be scattered here and there through the air.

But if she opposed him? If, after seven and twenty years of dumb submission, she should rebel? and not now, and for once only, but for ever, should refuse him obedience? If she should appear as the mistress and superior? Well, she would do so at her peril! He was prepared for it too. The time for temporising, waiting, diplomatising, would be over at once; there would only be a very plain, very clearly-expressed question:

Yes, or no? But she would never have the courage. And she was welcome to hate him, if only she feared and obeyed him.

A slight noise near him made him look up, and he started as he met the fiery black eyes of his young countryman.

"Eccolo!" cried Giraldi, stretching out his hand with his most bewitching smile; "how did you get here, my boy?"

"There was a lack of dancing-men," answered Antonio, pressing the offered hand to his heart; "the maestro was desired to bring a few young artists with him, and was good enough to think of me."

"And why are you not dancing?"

"I have not the happiness of being acquainted with so many beautiful young ladies as Eccellenza."

Giraldi smiled, whilst he turned over in his own mind whether Antonio could have recognised in Bertalda the veiled lady who came to see Ferdinanda. It was extremely improbable, but he must give some explanation of his intimate conversation with the pretty girl.

"Do you envy me my happiness, Antonio?" he asked.

"I do not grudge Eccellenza his happiness. Who can deserve it better?" answered Antonio, with fawning humility.

"And since you are modest, you will be happier than all the gold in the world can make me. You are young and handsome, and—you love; and that your love may be crowned with success, you have but to leave it to me and Brother Ambrosio. We are both busy on your behalf. Have a little patience only, and your probation will be ended, and you will have everything your heart can wish for—yes, more than you have dreamed of in your wildest dreams; but, above all, revenge—the most brilliant, triumphant, heart-stirring revenge—upon your enemy! I swear it to you by the Sacred Heart and the Holy Virgin!" The two Italians crossed themselves. "And now, my boy, I will talk to you in a few days. For to-day forget the cares of love, and pluck the rose of pleasure, without wounding yourself with the thorns."

He pointed towards the ball-room, again pressed Antonio's hand, and went.

The young man looked after him with a gloomy brow, as he slowly walked away. He had never for a moment doubted that the charming young girl whom he had seen talking so earnestly and familiarly to the signor, was the same whom he had met that evening in the dusk—that is to say, the same who had at one time repeatedly visited Ferdinanda;

he knew her height and figure so well. She might be his mistress—well, but then what had she to do with Ferdinanda? Why had he not told him the real state of the case? Why did he not tell him the lady's name to-day? Why had he passed as quickly as possible to another subject—or rather had only repeated the same fine speeches with which he had so often flattered his confiding companion, although to this day not one of his promises had come true? And were these to suffice him? Was he to prolong his miserable life for this—he whom the clever signor had long ceased to trust? The signor had better beware of a person named Antonio Michele, who, when the signor had sworn by the Sacred Heart and the Holy Virgin, had also taken an oath which stood in the closest connection with that of the signor. There was the signor's lady. He would not approach her directly—Antonio Michele was not such a fool—but he would try and find out her name, which could not be very difficult; and, above all, he would not lose sight of her.

Meanwhile Giraldi had wandered farther through the over-crowded rooms, looking round him from time to time to see if he could discover Ottomar, uncertain whether he wished

to do so, or whether he should wait for him, whether it would not be better to go away now and leave things to take their course. The train for Sundin started at one o'clock. It was now twelve; he had still half an hour. Half an hour! Half a minute would have been enough generally for him to decide the most weighty matters. But a man grew stupid from dealing with fools. And now that boy also must get in his way!

The sudden and quite unexpected meeting with Antonio had troubled Giraldi greatly. He had not thought about the young man for a long time; he had almost forgotten him, as he did all those whom he did not require immediately, or might not require again, for the furtherance of his plans. He required Antonio no longer. For the net which he was weaving for Ottomar and Ferdinanda, Bertalda was a much more accommodating and convenient tool. About Reinhold and Elsa he had long known all that he wished to know; and over the ardour with which at first he had followed up the idea of making out the handsome young man to be the son who should restore the already shaken relations between him and Valerie, he had himself smiled since. If Brother Ambrosio, indeed, had entered willingly into the affair—

if by his hints to Valerie he had awakened her longing, if not hope, for the lost son! But the experiment had entirely failed; it had even rather had the contrary result, and had shown him more clearly than ever that her heart was more and more, perhaps was entirely, turned against him. And even if, perhaps under other circumstances, he returned to his plan, there was no use thinking any more of Antonio, against whom Valerie's suspicions had once been roused. She would not now believe in the strongest proof, to say nothing of a more or less well-invented fiction. And it was for this, for this hollow mockery, that he had inspired that passionate spirit with brilliant hopes and ambitious dreams, which must soon prove themselves an empty nothing, in which the young man himself perhaps no longer believed. There was sometimes a wild glare in the black eyes that had suggested to him that the young man would sooner or later go mad—perhaps was already so; and at the moment in which he swore to him that he should be revenged upon his mortal enemy, a smile had passed like a flash across his usually firm-set lips, which only admitted of one interpretation. If he ever learnt that the man who had promised to help him to gain the woman he loved had driven her into

the arms of his rival, would it not be well while it was yet time to give the murderous weapon another direction—the right direction —to the heart of their mutual enemy? To say to Antonio, "I must confess to you, my son, that what you have above all things feared is true—the woman you love is now in his arms. I could not prevent it. Kill me! Or, if you would avenge yourself and me, keep your dagger ready—I know you always carry it with you. In a few minutes he will be here, still intoxicated with his happiness. Strike him! strike him down!"

Giraldi had stood leaning against the door-post, lost in his bloodthirsty fancies as in a dream, looking with fixed eyes upon the throng, without seeing anything. Suddenly he started. There in front of him, only separated by the width of the room, was Ottomar. He was talking to one or two other officers, and still had his back to him. He could still get away through the door against which he was leaning into the next room, and out of the house. That would be best. After all his arrangements were made, the manager might give up the stage to his puppets. What need was there of a dagger in this domestic drama? A few dishonoured bills, a good deal of gossip, truth

cunningly mixed with falsehood and cleverly insinuated in society, and the wished-for result could not be long in coming, even if one or other of the wires failed in its effect. "To be too busy is some danger," as Hamlet says over the body of Polonius.

And Giraldi slipped back into the room from which he had come, and, passing through some side-rooms and down the brilliantly-lighted marble staircase, gained the vestibule and cloak-room.

Some guests were still arriving—a few ladies who, to judge from their remarks, had been kept late in the ballet, and an elderly gentleman, who took off his fur coat whilst the servant was helping Giraldi on with his. The Italian hastily turned up his collar, but the other had already recognised him, and stopped him as he was going.

"What, Signor Giraldi! Are you going already?"

"I am tired to death, Councillor, and the heat and noise upstairs are amazing."

"I have already been three times to-day to your house in vain. I must talk to you at least for a moment. What do you think of it, my dear friend—what do you think of it?"

"Of what?"

The Councillor almost let his crush-hat

fall. "Of what? Good heavens! Is it possible to talk about anything to-day except this abominable speech?"

"It appears not," said Giraldi. "Every other man and every fourth lady is talking about it upstairs. Fortunately it does not concern me."

"Not directly," said the Councillor eagerly, "but indirectly. How clever you have been again. The only man who would not hear of a postponement of the date of payment of the second half of the purchase-money. You were only too right. The Count is ruined. He will never pay the second half."

"One must reconcile oneself to the inevitable."

"Very philosophical! But indeed with your genius for finance, you will soon make up for it. I only heard to-day that you—I presume on the part of the Baroness, but it is the same thing—had lent the Count the half million with which he——"

Giraldi's brows met together like a thundercloud.

"Had the Count been talking—against his word of honour?"

"The Count! the Count!" cried the Councillor. "As if he troubled himself about anything. He throws his shares into the market,

depreciates their value, and in short amuses himself. I regret, by every hair on my head, that we ever had anything to do with a fine gentleman! Lübbener——"

"Ah!" said Giraldi.

"Of course, Lübbener," continued the Councillor, "he no doubt only acted in the interests of the railway, when he paid you this afternoon the half million of the mortgage, after you had declared your fixed resolution in any other case to move for an immediate public sale. I cannot blame you either for wishing to get back at once money which seemed in such danger; but it is hard when friends and foes alike work for our ruin——"

"I do not consider Lübbener's finances by any means exhausted."

"Because—pardon me, my dear sir,—this supposition suits you; I can assure you I was with him a quarter of an hour after you had finished your business with him. He was furious. He said it had done for him, and for our whole enterprise. Lasker's speech this morning—shares went down twenty per cent.; half a million to pay this afternoon, for which he was not in the least prepared—it was the beginning of the end——"

"Just what Herr von Wallbach said," said

Giraldi. "But pardon me, Councillor, it is rather warm here——"

"You will not come up again?"

"On no account."

"Perhaps you are right," said the Councillor. "I would go with you if it were not for Lübbener, who is sure to be up there——"

"I did not see him."

"You must have overlooked our little friend. I wanted to tell him something that I have just heard from the Minister who sent for me, and has only just set me free, and which I hope may be useful to him in to-morrow's battle."

"Then I will take leave of you. I am really tired to death."

The Councillor had not yet let go the button of Giraldi's coat. Through the comparative silence of these downstairs rooms sounded from above the wild strains of a furious waltz, and the dumb rush and sweep of the dancers, whose whirling steps made the magnificent building tremble as if with ague.

"They are dancing over a volcano," said the Councillor in a low voice. "Believe me, he cannot hold out; it is impossible. We have been obliged to pay him with shares, of

course, like all the world. How he is to meet his engagements now that our shares have fallen to twenty—heaven only knows. I calculate that the man will be ruined in three weeks at the latest, and we with him."

"I regret it extremely, but if the world were coming to an end in half an hour, I should go to bed now."

The Councillor let go the button almost terrified. Such a wicked look had shot out of Giraldi's great black eyes, although he had spoken with the tired smile of a completely worn-out man.

"One would think he might play an active part in the downfall of the world," murmured the Councillor, as he brushed up his short, dry hair before the big looking-glass. "Strange what odd ideas come into my head when I am with that man! Such calmness at such a moment! He does business to the extent of half a million, of which no human soul is aware, loses another half million, and—goes to bed! Mysterious man!"

The Councillor put his brush in his pocket, pulled out once more his white tie, seized his crush-hat, and was on the point of leaving the cloak-room, when another guest stepped hastily in, and throwing his fur coat on the table, called to the servant, in a voice apparently trembling

with haste, "Be good enough to keep them separate. I shall only be here a short time. Ah, Councillor!"

"Good gracious, Lübbener, what is the matter with you?"

Lübbener signed to him to be silent, and laid his finger on his lips at the same time, then drew the horrified Councillor into the farthest corner of the cloak-room, and said, as he stood on the tips of his toes, and stretched his short neck as far as possible out of his white tie, "Is he still upstairs?"

"Giraldi?" asked the Councillor, whose mind was still full of the Italian's image. "You must have met him at the door."

"He! Philip—Schmidt?"

Utterly absurd as the question seemed, the Councillor could not smile; his friend's face, always grey, was now ashy-white; the little black eyes, which generally twinkled so merrily, were now fixed; each one of the short hairs, so thickly covering the low forehead, seemed to stand up of itself.

"Do not stare at me so," exclaimed Lübbener. "I am quite in my right senses; I only hope that other people see as clearly into their affairs as I do with mine. I was with Haselow just before closing-time, to see if he could not help me with a hundred thou-

sand or so to-morrow, as I had had a somewhat heavy payment to make, for which I was not prepared. 'It is just the same with me,' said Haselow. 'Signor Giraldi took away the last fifty thousand of the Warnow money an hour ago—the whole half million in three days.'"

"Extraordinary! most extraordinary!" said the Councillor; "as the agent of the Baroness, to whom the half belongs, we certainly allowed him to invest the whole, but still—"

"Beware! beware!" gasped the other. "There is something wrong—very wrong. Yesterday Golm throws half a million into the market; I keep up the price notwithstanding to thirty; this morning that abominable speech of Lasker's—down they go to twenty; this afternoon I have to pay Giraldi every farthing of the Golm mortgage. I have struggled, I am struggling still desperately, but there are limits to everything."

"It is very hard," said the Councillor, sighing. "Our splendid, splendid enterprise! The Minister, too, was quite in despair to-day; but—shall we not go upstairs? We can go on with our conversation there. I have several things of importance to communicate to you."

"Hush!" said Lübbener.

He stood listening intently, then walked quickly to the big window from which he could see out of the cloak-room into the vestibule, shook his head and came back to the Councillor, muttering unintelligibly between his pale lips.

"What is the matter now?" said the Councillor anxiously.

The banker's little black eyes glanced towards the servants in the cloak-room. They could hear nothing, and were moreover occupied in arranging their numbers; then he made the Councillor a sign to stoop his tall figure to him.

"I ought to have consulted you properly, but the danger that he"—the banker pointed with his finger in the direction from which the noise of the ball came—"was too great. Our four millions preference shares which would have to be issued now—"

"Good heavens!" said the Councillor.

"It was a mere vague suspicion, but it left me no peace. He and I, you know, have the keys, and when after the office was shut, I told the clerk I had some business still to do—true enough"—the Councillor had bent his head so low that the banker was whispering into his ear. Then they looked fixedly into each other's eyes. The Coun-

cillor's long face had turned as grey as the other's.

"But this is a matter for the police," he said.

An evil smile crossed the banker's compressed lips.

"It has cost me a great deal of trouble to convince them of it."

"So then——"

The banker nodded.

"And when?"

"I expect them every minute. They wanted me to show myself here, because my remaining away altogether—"

"Quite right! Quite true!" said the Councillor. "It is very, very painful—still —I will certainly—under these circumstances——"

And he made a step towards the cloak-room table.

"Councillor, you will not," cried Lübbener, holding fast by his coat-tail.

At this moment a tremendous flourish of trumpets sounded in the vestibule. The servants rushed from behind their table to the window. The pretty girls who had been waiting upon the ladies ran past them; "They are coming, they are coming."

The two gentlemen had also gone to the

window, as the flourish sounded a second time, from long trumpets, which eight men dressed as heralds were blowing on the broad landing of the staircase. They turned their instruments upwards to right and left, as if to summon the assembly from above. And in fact they had scarcely uttered their call for the third time, before the company, who had been prepared beforehand, began to appear.

A splendid sight, whose magnificence even the Councillor, in spite of his thoughts being full of anxiety and care, could not but allow, whilst the servants broke out into loud cries of admiration; only Herr Lübbener's grey countenance kept the look of a man who is too much behind the scenes to take much pleasure in the play himself.

The guests came down the marble stairs from both sides, the width being more than sufficient for two couples at once. The brilliant streams met on the landing, but only to separate again, and swarm down the lower stairs to the vestibule, which already began to fill, whilst the staircase and surrounding passages were still swarming with the gay crowd, which while waiting for the stairs to be free for them, could meanwhile enjoy the brilliant spectacle from above all the longer. Preceded by the trumpeting

heralds they paraded the vestibule, which was decorated by Justus's four statues, and brightly lighted by an immense chandelier and numerous candelabra, while it was divided from the outer hall by splendid columns, till suddenly the great folding-doors were flung open, and, as the trumpets ceased, soft music sounding from within invited to the pleasures of the table.

"Did you see him?" asked Lübbener, with a grim smile.

"How could I avoid it?" answered the Councillor, sighing; "with my old friend Baroness Kniebreche on his arm. Wonderful! The man has nerves of steel."

"I think you had better come in with me, Councillor," said Lübbener; "if only for the reason that I suspect you could not get out of the house now."

"Do you think so?" said the Councillor, sighing; "then there is really nothing else to be done."

And he followed his resolute companion, with anything but a festive countenance, into the vestibule, where they mingled with the last comers, who, now that the ranks had been broken, were pressing most impatiently into the supper-room.

CHAPTER VI.

ANY anxiety about finding places proved quite unfounded. There would have been room for the whole party in the gorgeous dining-room, if every seat had been occupied at the little tables laid for eight or ten people each. But as it had been foreseen that this would not be the case, tables were also laid in the great conservatory, which stood at right angles with the dining-room and connected this wing of the house with the other. The last comers had the privilege of supping under palm trees, as Justus laughingly remarked to Ottomar, both being amongst the latest arrivals.

"Stay with us," said Ottomar, pointing to his table, at which three or four officers and some ladies belonging to the theatre, amongst whom was Bertalda, were trying to arrange

themselves. "I think there is room enough, if not we will make room."

"I am sorry," answered Justus; "but I am already engaged to a few friends there in the corner, and if our garden is not quite so brilliant as yours—yet you see we also have roses blooming."

"And magnificent ones. Who is the lady in silver grey? What a splendid figure!"

Justus laughed. "You must not betray me. Perfect carnival freedom reigns here. She is a cousin of my colleague Bunzel, alias —his model, alias ——"

"Werben! Werben!" resounded from the officers' table.

"Justus! Justus!" from that of the artists'.

"Hope you will enjoy yourself," cried Ottomar.

"Same to you," said Justus; and to himself he added, "poor boy!"

He knew the sad story, and had besides heard lately from Reinhold, with whom he kept up a constant correspondence, new and worse things of Carla, which Meta, who had arrived quite unexpectedly this morning, fully confirmed.

"You will see," said Meta, "it will turn out badly. Dear Elsa suspects nothing; but I have a pair of sharp eyes, you know, and I

am sure that the Count and Carla have got some understanding between them. If only Ottomar would let her go! but he is the sort of man who, if any one tries to take from him what he ought to be thankful to let go, says, 'No, not now.' He is not so sensible as we are, you know. And now make haste and be off to your great party!"

How laughing and beaming were his Meta's eyes, who by her great good sense had overcome all obstacles—"To-morrow we will order the furniture to suit your artistic tastes, you know!"—and how darkly and restlessly gleamed the eyes in which he had just looked! "The handsome face sunken and wasted as if in the last ten weeks he had aged twice as many years," thought Justus, "and in spite of his gay words, how bitter a look there had been upon his lips! Poor boy!"

"What are you making such a wry face for?" cried Kille, the architect, as the new comer approached the table.

"No mooning allowed here!" cried Bencke, the historical painter.

"He is thinking of the left hip of his 'Industry,' which is so much awry that it is almost dislocated!" cried friend Bunzel.

"Or of Lasker's speech, which has been cutting everybody up!" cried the architect.

"I am thinking just now of what you are always thinking of, nothing at all!" said Justus, taking a place next to Bunzel's "cousin," and passing his hand over his bald forehead to brush away the unpleasant impression.

It would have been hard indeed for even a less cheerful disposition to have given way to gloomy thoughts at this table and in such company. They talked and laughed and joked in the most extravagant way. They had all worked at the great building, especially the architect who had drawn the plan and directed the execution, and now were showing up each other's mistakes in good-humoured banter. And between whiles came serious and weighty talk upon art and artists, or upon Lasker's speech, which Justus, who in the sweat of his brow had sat out the whole debate—"for reasons, you know, Meta"—thought splendid beyond all belief, while the architect declared that the man might certainly be right on the whole—there were stranger stories even connected with some of the railroads—but of actual building he knew no more than a new-born babe; till one or the other who thought the conversation was getting too serious, threw in some wild joke, and the laughter that had been for a short

time checked resounded again louder and more heartily than ever. And at the other tables, if there was perhaps less mirth, there was no less noise. The champagne flowed in streams. The innumerable servants had enough to do to renew the empty bottles in the silver wine-coolers; and great irritation seemed to be felt at the smallest neglect of the servants in this matter. Everybody gave orders; everybody wanted the best wine, the second best was good for nothing, People passed the wine or the dishes from table to table, "just as if it had been a public dinner," said Baroness Kniebreche, surveying the crowd through her eye-glass; "quite like an hotel. I never saw such a thing in a private house before. It is extremely amusing. Do you know, Wallbach, that when you passed behind my chair just now I was within an ace of addressing you as the head waiter."

"Ha! Very funny!" answered Wallbach absently. "You cannot expect to find the good company and manners to which we are accustomed in such a house as this. It is and will always remain the house of a parvenu. But I was going to ask you, my dear Baroness, if you had kept your counsel as to the last piece of information I gave you, as I asked you to do?"

"The last piece of information?" cried the Baroness; "but, my dear child, you have told me so much, that I positively have forgotten which is the first and which is the last. Why do you want to know?"

"Ottomar avoids me in a way which, notwithstanding that our relations have been disturbed lately, is most marked. Just now he looked straight over my head."

"Then look over his head, my dear child. I really can give you no other advice. Besides, what is it you want? You can't wash fur without wetting it. That's nonsense. If you want to have a row, have it—if not, let it alone; but don't bother me any more about the matter. And now give me some of that lobster salad—there, at your elbow—it is delicious."

"The old woman is drunk," muttered Wallbach, as he returned to his place at the next table.

Philip had excused himself for a quarter of an hour from the old lady to go round the room, and was now going from table to table with his glass, which had to be constantly replenished, in his hand, received here with praises of the splendid feast, there with cordial shouts, "Splendid, my dear fellow!" "Well done, my boy!" and at several points

with hurrahs and drinking of healths; while at others people seemed to require a reminder that the gentleman in the white tie and waistcoat, with the broad forehead, and the courteous smile on his red, clean-shaven face, who stood there glass in hand before them, was the master of the house.

Philip had gone the round of the room, and must now pay a visit to the conservatory which opened out of the room. He came here at once upon a large table surrounded by young men, who received him with such enthusiasm that he seemed quite to overlook a smaller table close by, and with a wave of his hand and a jesting word to the young men was passing on farther, when a hoarse well-known voice said: "Now then, Schmidt, are not we to have the honour?" Philip's face quivered, but it was beaming as if in joyful surprise as he turned round and threw up his arms, crying, "At last! Why, Lübbener, Councillor! Where the deuce have you been hiding? I really thought I was to be deprived of this pleasure. And you are quite alone, too! Like the lions, you keep apart!"

"We were late comers," said the Councillor, touching Philip's extended glass with his; "it was a mere matter of chance!"

"As long as you are amusing yourselves," said Philip.

"Certainly," answered Lübbener. "We can see here into both rooms. It is the best place of all."

"Then it belongs to you by right," cried Philip. "The best place in the room. The best in the house! Where would room and house be without you, my good Hugo? Dear old man!"

And, as if overcome with emotion, he took the little man in his arms, and held him, not daring to resist, pressed to his breast, when a loud voice a few steps from them cried, "Gentlemen!"

"Oh, horror!" exclaimed Philip, letting Lübbener out of his embrace.

"Ladies and gentlemen—"

The speaker was a bank clerk from the young men's table, famed among his companions for his extraordinary talent for after-dinner speeches. He had so placed himself, glass in hand, between the dining-room and the conservatory that he might have been heard in both rooms, if, in the noise which increased every moment, one man's voice had not been as much lost as a drop in the ocean.

"Stand on a chair, Norberg!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Stand on two chairs, Norberg; one is of no use."

"Ladies and gentlemen—"

"Louder, louder! Silence! Hear, hear!"

Nobody could hear anything, but here and there people could see some one standing on a chair gesticulating, and apparently making an attempt to speak; they drew the attention of their neighbours, and though silence was not attained, Herr Norberg, with renewed hopes, exerted the full force of his lungs, so far overpowering the noise as to make himself audible, at least to the circle which had gathered round him, and which was increasing every moment.

"Ladies and gentlemen! Our German proverb says that every man forges his own fortune—"

"Bravo! hear, hear!"

"But, unfortunately, every one does not understand smith's work, and the work fails in consequence. For the smith's work we need a Schmidt—" *

"Very good! Hear! Silence there!"

"And if a smith forges his fortune, we may be assured that it is a work which he need

* No translation can give the full effect of the play upon the word "Schmidt;" *Anglicè*, Smith.—*Translator's Note.*

not be ashamed of before masters or apprentices."

"Capital! Bravo! Bravissimo!"

"And, ladies and gentlemen, the masters, and more particularly we young apprentices who have still much to learn, and who wish to learn, will watch his fingers in order to find out how and with what tools he works; for the tools are the first consideration!"

"Bravo! Bravo!"

There was almost perfect silence. Herr Norberg, now sure of his effect, continued in a pathetic tone of voice:

"But what are his tools? First, of course, the anvil—the immovable anvil, formed of the cast steel of honesty—"

"Hear! hear!"

"Of honesty, which can bear every blow and shock, because it rests on its own merits, and tested as it is by the enduring and flattering confidence of the initiated, and, if I may so express myself, polished by the good report of all honest people—"

"Bravo! bravo!"

"May laugh to scorn the rust of slanderous tongues which are raised against it and its like, if such there be, even should it proceed from the tribune of a certain great House—"

The last words were scarcely to be heard in

the indescribable uproar which arose at the first allusion to the great event of the day, with which the minds of all were still filled, or at least occupied. Whether the opprobrious word was approved or condemned by the majority of the company, it was impossible to decide. Encouraging, even enthusiastic acclamations, in which Norberg's particular friends were the loudest, words of dissatisfaction, of disapproval, even of the greatest indignation, all this buzzed, resounded, and reverberated, till almost suddenly the storm abated, as if all, friends and foes, were curious to hear what the man would utter further, as they all took it for granted that he would not rest satisfied with this one sally.

But the prudent Norberg was careful not to stake the issue of his well-considered speech by another impromptu. He spoke again in the flowery language in which he had begun, of the "Heavy hammer of Strength," which the master he honoured could wield better than any other; of the indefatigable "Pincers of Energy," with which he held fast to plans that he had once made; even of the "Bellows of strong breathing Courage," which ever renewed in his own breast and in the hearts of his fellow-workmen the flame of inspiration which

belongs to all creative power. Provided with these tools, and gifted with these qualities, it had been possible for the master to attain to this imposing result; to carry through his vast plans in spite of the indifference of the public, in spite of the ignorant opposition of the authorities; to make new roads for trade, convenient ways for commerce, towards the completion of which he was now working, it might reasonably be hoped not in vain, in spite of all and everything. Lastly, as the keystone of the edifice of his fortune, or to keep to his simile, "as the last link in the long chain of famous works which he has forged, to erect this house, which he has made so great, so splendid, not for himself, for he is the most retiring of men, but for his friends, whom he has assembled around him to-day in hundreds, as representatives of the remaining thousands, and who may now prove their representative powers by three times three, as from the thousands, for the brave, disinterested Schmidt, the smith of his own fortune."

The company acceded to the invitation, some from conviction, the majority excited by wine, not a few out of mere politeness, with loud hurrahs, accompanied by a noisy flourish from the band, while the speaker

descended from his chair and received, with proud modesty, the thanks of his host and the congratulations of the guests. He had surpassed himself to-day; he had been magnificent, it was only a pity and a shame that he had not given it stronger to Lasker, who really had deserved more.

"I do not think he will be too pleased as it is," answered Herr Norberg complacently; "but now, Schmidt, old boy, up with you! You can't help yourself!"

"No, you can't help yourself!" chimed in the guests; "up with you! fire away!"

"But, gentlemen," exclaimed Philip, "after such a speech! Let me have a few minutes to think at least."

"It won't do you any good!" said Herr Norberg encouragingly and patronisingly, "I know all about it! Improvise as I did, it always answers best."

"If you think——"

"Silence! listen! don't you see?"

The tall, broad-shouldered man who now stood on the chair was visible enough; and as his appearance in that place was already expected, there ensued at any rate sufficient quiet to enable him to begin with a certain amount of dignity.

He would be brief, as fortunately he was in

a position to be. The gratitude he felt for the distinguished honour which had just been shown him, for the kindness, the friendliness, yes, he ventured to say the word—the affection which was showered upon him—such gratitude, heartfelt as it was, could be expressed in a few words which, however, came from the heart. Besides, it was not expected from the man of deeds, in which capacity he had just been honoured, that he should be an orator like his predecessor, whose speech it was easier to criticise than to surpass; he had detected one defect. His strength, his courage, his honesty had been praised; those were qualities which, the latter especially, he expected from every man; and he therefore ventured to accept a small portion of the exuberant praise lavished upon him.

"The whole of it!—without deduction—without discount—with interest!" exclaimed the enthusiastic crowd.

"Well, well, gentlemen!" exclaimed Philip, "if you will have it so, the full praise! But, gentlemen, what of the head, the mind and understanding? Perhaps you will say they do not exist——"

"Oh, oh! I will take a hundred thousand shares in you!" shrieked the enthusiastic auditors.

"No, no, gentlemen!" shouted Philip over the heads of the shouters; "where nothing exists, the King himself must lose his rights. I am no Prince and Imperial Chancellor, who has not only his heart, but his head also in the right place."

Here Philip was compelled to pause, till the storm of applause which his last words had called forth was somewhat abated.

"Yes, gentlemen, I acknowledge it; he is my ideal, but an unattainable one! The qualities that a great man, world-renowned as he is, unites in himself—the most opposite qualities, yet all equally necessary to success—for these we small people must combine. And with me it is no accidental chance, but a dispensation of Providence, and a sure confirmation, that in this moment, without any previous agreement, as you will believe me on my word, the two men who are my associates in business and in every sense of the word, are standing near me; and in this association if I am really the heart, they have unquestionably the department of the head; here to my right, Councillor Schieler—to my left, the banker, Hugo Lübbener."

Uproarious applause followed, which changed to shouts of laughter, in which even the impartial spectators joined, when the

next moment, raised and held fast by the irresistible hands of the half-intoxicated crowd, the two gentlemen named by Philip appeared in person on chairs to his right and left. Philip, with quick presence of mind, seized the hands of both, and cried:

"Here! I have you, I hold you, my two heads who are only one, and who are all in all one with me; one heart and one soul! I was about to call for a cheer for these two, without whom I were nothing; but as we three are one, and cannot with the best wishes for health drink our own healths, I ask you, we ask you for a cheer, a hearty cheer for those whom we have to thank for the satisfaction of being here together this evening, and I think I may say, of enjoying ourselves; the architect of this house and the artists who have decorated it."

While the company willingly complied with his request, and the band again accompanied them with a shrill flourish of trumpets; while Herr Norberg embraced Philip and assured him that he himself could not have done it better; while the two other gentlemen, who had sprung quickly from their chairs, were overpowered with shaking of hands and congratulations, great excitement reigned in the group of artists. Of course somebody

must answer, but who should it be? The historical painter would just as soon have mounted the scaffold; one or two others "could have done it, but it was not in their line;" the architect, as a native of Berlin, freemason, and member of numberless societies, a born and bred orator, did not see why he who had done the most should do anything extra now.

"Justus must speak!" exclaimed Bunzel; "he can take the opportunity of putting to rights that dislocated hip."

"As you will," said Justus; "there is something here that requires setting to rights undoubtedly, of which your empty heads would never think."

"Silence there! Hear! hear! Silence!" thundered the artists.

"Bravo! bravo! *da capo!*" shrieked the young men.

"I think once will be enough, gentlemen," said Justus, who was already mounted on the chair.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I come before you as a boy before his schoolmaster. For though it is only proper that we artists should express our thanks for the kindness shown to us, I am neither the eldest nor the youngest amongst us, neither the one who has the

greatest merit with regard to this beautiful house, nor perhaps the one amongst us who has sinned most with regard to it; but as I am here, I offer in all our names my most grateful thanks for your goodness, and as I feel by no means steady on this rickety pedestal, and as I have learnt from my predecessors——"

"Bravo! bravo!" exclaimed the artists.

"That if one wishes to leave this place one must first look out for a successor, but feel that in this way the matter would never come to an end, I have chosen for the purpose a person who is not in this company; and I ask you to give a cheer for him, who has already spoken himself to-day, and has spoken to my heart, and, I know, to the hearts of many in this company; and to give a second cheer for him, because it would ill become this company if a word were spoken against him here, as has been done, without an answer being forthcoming from amongst us; and a third cheer, and long life to him who requires three lives in order to carry out the herculean labour he has undertaken!"

Justus drew up his slender figure, and his clear voice sounded like a trumpet:

"Long live Edward Lasker!"

And his "Hip! hip! hurrah!" resounded

in shouts from the artists, whilst the astonished opponents remained silent, and all who had been shocked at the previous offensive words, and they were many, cheered with them, and the music sounded in the midst, so that the whole room shook, and old Baroness Kniebreche shrieked out to Baroness Holzweg, "I really believe I can hear again with both ears!"

The storm was still raging when Anton, the valet, came up to Philip, who stood shrugging his shoulders and trying to smooth matters amidst a group of gentlemen who were all talking to him at once, with violent gesticulations, hoping and expecting that he would properly resent and punish such a public insult. Anton must have had something very urgent to say, as he pulled his master repeatedly by the sleeve, and dragged him almost by force out of the group.

Philip's face had got very red, but at the first words which the servant, as he unwillingly bent towards him, whispered in his ear, it became white as ashes. He now himself hastily drew the man a few paces farther on one side.

"Where is the gentleman?"

"He is close at hand, in the billiard-room," answered Anton; "here is his card."

The servant was as pale as his master, and brought the words out with difficulty from between his chattering teeth.

"Any one with him?"

"They are in the vestibule and out in the street and in the court—oh, sir, sir!"

"Hush! Will you help me?"

"Willingly, sir."

Philip whispered a few words into the man's ear, who then went hastily through the room into the vestibule, from which, unchecked, he disappeared, through a door, into the cellar regions. Philip stood there for a few minutes, his firm lips tightly compressed, and his fixed eyes bent on the floor. He had not expected this; he had hoped to have had at least another week's law. The devil must have prompted Lübbener. However, the great haul must in the end have failed, and he had got the ready money, at any rate, provided; but he must venture it! If he could only get out of the house, they must be more than cunning—he had had everything prepared for weeks in case of this happening. As he again lifted his gloomy eyes, his glance encountered Lübbener's, who, only a few paces off, apparently in eager conversation with the Councillor and some other gentlemen, had closely observed the short scene between the master

and servant, and, as the former stepped back to the group, now turned his back upon him.

"Excuse me for a few minutes, gentlemen," said Philip; "I have still some arrangements to make for the cotillon, and then, if you please, we will leave the table."

He said it in his usual loud and swaggering tone, whilst at the same time he caught Lübbener by the wrist, as if in an overflow of hilarity, and drew him out of the group.

"What do you want?" gasped Lübbener.

"To tell you," said Philip, grinding his teeth, "that you shall pay me for this, sooner or later!"

He flung the little man from him so that he tumbled backwards into the group, and making his way through the conservatory with a firm step, passed into the billiard-room, to meet a gentleman who stood there alone with folded arms, leaning on one of the tables, and apparently studying the ornamentation of the door through which Philip entered.

"Inspector Müller?" said Philip, who still held the card in his hand.

"I have that honour," answered the inspector, unfolding his arms so slowly that he could not well take Philip's outstretched hand.

"And what procures me this pleasure?" asked Philip.

"The pleasure is a very doubtful one, Herr Schmidt. I have a warrant against you!"

The officer took a paper from his breast-pocket, and so held it that Philip could easily have read it by the lamp over the billiard-table; but Philip had taken up a ball, and was making a hazard.

"A warrant! How very strange! Look there! a double hazard too! Are you a billiard player, Herr Müller?"

"Occasionally, when I have time, which I seldom have—for instance, not at present. I must therefore beg of you to follow me without delay."

"And leave my guests? But, Herr Müller, just imagine—four hundred people, and no host! It is absolutely impossible!"

"It must be possible."

"But it is not necessary. You are my guest. Toilette at this hour is of no consequence; besides, you are got up regardless. Remain by my side, of course—a cousin who has just arrived—what you will! Your men, in plain clothes I take it for granted, can amuse themselves finely meanwhile with my people. Afterwards we can drive together in my carriage——"

and servant, and, as the former stepped back to the group, now turned his back upon him.

"Excuse me for a few minutes, gentlemen," said Philip; "I have still some arrangements to make for the cotillon, and then, if you please, we will leave the table."

He said it in his usual loud and swaggering tone, whilst at the same time he caught Lübbener by the wrist, as if in an overflow of hilarity, and drew him out of the group.

"What do you want?" gasped Lübbener.

"To tell you," said Philip, grinding his teeth, "that you shall pay me for this, sooner or later!"

He flung the little man from him so that he tumbled backwards into the group, and making his way through the conservatory with a firm step, passed into the billiard-room, to meet a gentleman who stood there alone with folded arms, leaning on one of the table[illegible] and apparently studying the ornament[illegible] of the door through which Philip ente[illegible]

"Inspe[illegible] Mull[illegible]" said Philip[illegible] held [illegible]

"You are very kind, but a carriage is already provided, and now stands in the court-yard amongst a number of equipages, so that we need not again pass through the vestibule. You see, Herr Schmidt, I go to work with the greatest consideration; but I must now really beg that you will not put my patience to a longer test."

Philip rolled the ball which he held in his hand from him at random, and turned round.

"Well, if nothing else will satisfy you; but I hope I may change my dress?"

"I have no objection to that, only you must submit to my presence meanwhile."

"No apologies, Herr Müller, between men! Will you be so good?"

And he led the way, the officer following on his steps. In the library, which opened out of the billiard-room, an assistant officer was waiting, who now joined them.

"You are very cautious, Herr Müller," said Philip over his shoulder.

"My duty, Herr Schmidt!"

He touched Philip's arm, and said in a low voice, "If you will give me your word of honour to make no attempt at escape, which would moreover be quite fruitless, I can" —and the inspector made a sign over

his shoulder — "spare you at least this escort."

"No attempt at escape!" said Philip laughing; "oh! Herr Müller, I can think of nothing else. I would vanish through the floor or the walls if I only could."

The officer could not help smiling.

"Go back into the vestibule again, Ortmann," he said.

"Thank you for your confidence," said Philip, as they went up a winding staircase, guarded by a handsome richly-gilt railing, by means of which the library was connected with the upper story of the right wing, which was separated from the ball-room by the whole width of the courtyard, that was partially glazed like the conservatory.

"The fact is, Herr Müller, that inconvenient as it certainly is to me, I cannot take this episode really in earnest——"

Philip had opened a door in the corridor in which they now stood.

"This is a passage-room," he said in an explanatory tone; "I should prefer to turn to the right, through that door into my living rooms, which are to-day being used also as company rooms. But as there is no help for it, we must go through the one on the left to my bedroom."

He pushed the door open. "Pray go first; for the time being, at least, I am still the host here."

The officer did as he was asked, ready, if his prisoner should attempt to shut the door upon him, which opened inwards, to stop it with his outstretched foot. But Philip followed him close, shutting the door behind him.

"My bedroom!" said Philip, waving his right hand, whilst the left still played with the lock, to the magnificent apartment, which, like all they had passed through, was brilliantly lighted with wax candles; "furnished in French style, and as if it were for a young lady who had just returned home from school! but these upholsterers are autocrats. This way, please, Herr Müller—my dressing-room—the last in the row—and dark—but that we can rectify."

Philip held up the branch candlestick, which he had taken from the console under the looking-glass in the bedroom, and threw the light all round as if to assure the Inspector that there was no second door in the space left free by the carved oak wardrobes, and that the one they had come in by was the only entrance and exit. He put the candlestick down on a table, took off his coat, and opened one of the cupboards.

"I will wait in your bedroom while you are dressing," said the officer.

"Pray do," said Philip, as he took off his white waistcoat and undid his tie; "I hope you will find the arm-chairs to your taste——"

The officer returned to the bedroom without quite shutting the door, and took his place on one of the magnificent sofas.

"From Delorme in Paris," said Philip, opening and shutting the cupboards in the dressing-room; "it is supposed to be something quite out of the way, although I cannot see it. Only a few minutes, Herr Müller; I am just as if I had come out of the river. My whole house is ventilated after the newest principles, and yet this awful heat! *À propos*, I suppose I may give notice downstairs that I have been taken suddenly unwell, and so forth."

"I have no objection," said the officer. "I am only afraid that, discreet as I have been, the rumour will have spread; it is generally so at least."

"It can't be helped then," said Philip, who seemed busy with his boots; "will the thing never come out? There, at last! What a pity that it is midnight, and the magistrates cannot be got hold of, or I should certainly be back again in half an hour. I have never

asked what it is about. I know without asking; it is some wretched trick of Lübbener's, to drive me out of the board of directors. I knew that he had been for some days in frightful difficulties, and was certain that our preference shares were not safe from him. No respectable bank would advance him a farthing upon the whole four million; but some swindling firm—he knows plenty of them — might advance him six or eight hundred thousand—a mere nothing in his position, but when there is nothing better to be had the devil himself eats flies. So, thought I, they are more secure in my hands than in the safe. In proof that I was right, he has found me out. You must know from experience, my dear Herr Müller, that no one thinks of looking for a man behind the bushes unless he has been in hiding there once or twice himself. It was a bold thing to do, I know, but mine is a daring nature. There! now another pair of boots, and I am ready."

Herr Schmidt, who must have been going about in slippers for the last five minutes, appeared to have gone again to one of the cupboards, in which he was hunting about. "Varnished boots? Impossible! these are the right ones—these," the officer heard him say, as if to himself. The creaking of a chair—he

was a heavy man—a smothered oath—the boots apparently did not go on easily—then silence.

Absolute silence for a minute, during which Herr Müller got up from his arm-chair and went to the window to look across the glass roof of the courtyard, to the illuminated windows of the ball-room, behind which one or two ladies and gentlemen could be seen. The supper had apparently lasted too long for the lovers of dancing, and since the master of the house had vanished, they wanted to set the ball going again of their own will. And indeed the music began again now from beyond, whilst beneath the glass roof sounded the stamping of horses, and the talking and shouting of the coachmen.

"A terrible business for Herr Schmidt," thought the Inspector; "the affair is certainly not literally as he represents it, but Lübbener is perhaps the biggest swindler of the two. They generally get off free. He might really be ready now."

Herr Müller stepped from the window back into the room. "Are you ready, Herr Schmidt?"

No answer.

"Are you—— Good God! the man must have done himself an injury!"

The officer pushed open the half-closed door

—the candelabra burnt on the dressing-table —coats and linen were strewed about—the room was empty.

"Don't play any foolish tricks, Herr Schmidt," said the officer, looking towards the big cupboard, whose door stood partly open.

But he no longer believed in a joke, as after having hastily glanced into the open cupboard, he threw the light of the candelabra right and left over the hangings, which were leather coloured to represent wood. No trace of a door! And yet there must be one! There, at last! This scarcely perceptible crack, where the darker stripes of the hangings met the lighter wainscoting—wonderfully done!—and here below, hardly visible, the tiny lock. Herr Müller pushed and kicked against the door, only to discover that it was made of iron and would defy his utmost efforts. He rushed out of the dressing-room into the bedroom—the door into the anteroom was locked! There, close to the handle, was the same lock as that on the concealed door, no bigger than the key-hole in the dial plate of a clock. He was a prisoner!

The infuriated officer threw open the window, and called as loudly as he could to his

men, of whom two should be in the courtyard. But on the other side the fiddles squeaked and the violoncellos growled, and below the horses stamped and the coachmen shouted and laughed. No one heard the cries from above, until in his despair he took the first thing that came to hand and flung it through the glass, so that the fragments fell upon the heads of a pair of fiery horses, which, frightened out of their wits, reared and backed, driving the carriage into another one behind them, which rolling back again made the horses of a third recoil. In the midst of the frightful confusion and the tremendous noise that ensued, the shouts of the officer were overpowered, until at last one of the policemen remarked them, but without being able to understand a word his superior said. Nevertheless, he hurried out of the court into the vaulted passage which, running on the right side of the building and round behind the court, connected the latter with the street, and was used for the exit of the carriages, those coming in entering on the opposite side, to tell his comrades who were posted there that something had happened, and that they must be on their guard. He had done so in a few breathless words, and was in the act of running back, when from one or other of the doors opening

into the passage, two servants rushed out, one an elderly man, who seemed to be trembling from head to foot with excitement, and one younger and very tall who nearly ran into his arms. The policeman connected the hurry of these servants with what had just occurred, and he was confirmed in this opinion by the fact of his remarking at the same moment, that a narrow, steep stone staircase led up from the door which the servants had in their haste left open.

"What has happened upstairs?" cried the policeman.

"Herr Schmidt has had a fit of apoplexy," answered the tall servant. "I am going for the doctor, do not detain me. Here is the Inspector's card."

"All right!" said the policeman, throwing a glance at the card. "Let him pass. He is going for the doctor. How can I get upstairs?"

"Straight up these steps," was the breathless reply.

"Then be off with you!"

The man rushed breathlessly to the exit past the policeman, who willingly made way for him, ran to the string of cabs which stood before the house, only carriages being allowed inside the courtyard, and sprang into the end

one, calling to the driver to go as quickly as possible; he should be well paid. It was a matter of life and death!

In the supper-room the confusion increased as the absence of the host continued.

Amongst the few who still kept their place was Baroness Kniebreche, although Herr von Wallbach urgently pressed her departure.

"Only a few minutes more," cried the Baroness, without taking her glass from her eye; "it is so interesting. In spite of my eighty-two years, I have never seen anything like it. Only just look, my dear Wallbach, at that table where the little bald-headed man is sitting who a little while ago proposed that man Lasker's health; tell me—I did not hear a word of it for my part. The man with the long fair hair is positively kissing his neighbour—an artist too of course—enviable people! Who is the handsome young man with the black hair and fiery eyes, at the same table? I have noticed him already this evening—a foreigner, we do not grow such plants. He, moreover, never takes his eyes off Ottomar's table. He seems to be struck by the pretty ballet-dancer. I cannot understand how Ottomar can go on flirting with Ferdinanda, when he has such a choice before him. But it is no use disputing about taste; it is a won-

derful thing. That faded Agnes Holzweg and Prince Wladimir. Well, he cannot be very particular, and it seems to be going off too, as he has not even been here for a few minutes. Take care of the old lady! Pooh! She can hear me? I can hardly hear myself speak. That old woman is a tremendous chatterer. She was talking just now for ever so long to young Grieben of the Hussars, who I think is somehow related to her, and has also paid attentions to Agnes in his time, before the Prince began to do so. There he is talking to Ottomar. If the old lady has been chattering, Grieben will take the greatest satisfaction in boring Ottomar with it, as he knows of his dislike to Agnes, whom Grieben, I hear, in spite of all, still adores."

"But, my dear lady," cried the horrified Wallbach, "you have not told that notorious gossip—"

"Look! look!" cried the Baroness, giving Wallbach a sharp blow with her closed fan, "there, at the first—second—fourth table! The men are coming to blows! it is really splendid! I never saw anything like it in my life."

"It really is high time for us to go," said Herr von Wallbach; "it is getting too bad. Allow me to send a servant for my carriage—"

"Well, if you really are determined," said

the Baroness, "but I am still amusing myself immensely."

Herr von Wallbach had stood up, but the servants who were hurrying about with wine and ices seemed little inclined to do his errand, and he was forced to look elsewhere through the room for some one more accommodating.

Whilst he was still talking to the Baroness, Ottomar went up to Justus, who was talking to his friend Bunzel as quietly as if the storm which he had raised, and which increased in fury every minute, was not of the slightest consequence to him.

"A word with you, Herr Anders."

"Ten, if you like," rejoined Justus, jumping up; "but for heaven's sake, Herr Von Werben——"

"What?"

"Pardon me! you did not look very cheerful before, but now—has anything unpleasant happened to you?"

"Indeed there has. Tell me, Herr Anders, I am in a great hurry, and cannot stop to explain—I know that you are very intimate with Captain Schmidt, and I have just heard that there exists some understanding between him and—my sister. Do you know anything of this?"

Justus did not know what this meant. Ottomar's eyes, blazing with fury and an excitement which rose above the fumes of wine, boded no good; but no evasion was possible.

"Yes, Herr Von Werben; and I am convinced that only the lack of any friendly advance on your part has made my friend hold back, and caused him to leave you in ignorance of his understanding with your sister, whilst, so far as I know, your father has long been acquainted with it."

"Very likely, very likely," said Ottomar; "my family and I have long been—but no matter! And in any case—I deeply regret that I did not cultivate Captain Schmidt's friendship—however, I admire and esteem him highly, very highly—I should always have considered it an honour—everything might have been so totally different——"

He passed his hand over his brow.

"Is there still no possibility?" asked Justus quickly.

A melancholy smile passed over the handsome face.

"How I wish there were," he said. "I thought myself—but it is too late, too late! I have found that out—this evening—just now—a man in my position cannot allow his name to be in every one's mouth; and that

fact is used with great skill—the greatest skill—confounded skill!"

His teeth were gnawing hard at his lip, his angry eyes looked beyond Justus into the room as if seeking some one, and they kept their direction as he asked, even more hastily and abruptly than before:

"Perhaps you are also acquainted with Car—with Fräulein von Wallbach's relations with—with—I see by your eyes that you know what I mean. And you—but the others, who are talking of it all round, and reckoning that for well-known reasons I must keep quiet about it; but I'll be hanged if I do!"

"Only a man cannot have everything at the same time," said Justus.

"But I will keep quiet before those chatterers until it suits one of them to speak out. I will settle it, believe me, in five minutes!"

Ottomar suddenly rushed away from Justus, "Like a falcon after its prey," thought the latter. "Oh, this fatal honour! What sacrifices has Moloch already required! Poor boy! I like him in spite of all the harm that he has already done and that he still seems intent upon doing. Well, I cannot hinder him with the best will in the world. Good gracious!—already half-past one!"

Justus had of his own accord promised Meta to leave the party at twelve o'clock punctually. He looked round for Antonio, who was talking eagerly, near the table at which Ottomar and the other officers had supped, with the piquante young lady whom one of the officers—not Ottomar—had conducted to supper, and who, now that Ottomar was also gone, appeared to have been left behind by the whole party.

"He is always making up to somebody, is Antonio," said Justus, as he watched the insinuating manners of his handsome assistant and the smiles of the young lady. "Let him be; I shall not get him to come home with me."

He looked from Antonio to the tall painter who was in hot argument with a few men who belonged to the "young men's table." "He will soon finish them off," thought Justus, just as two or three men left the group and came with angry faces towards him.

"You took upon yourself to wish long life to Lasker!" said a swarthy youth.

"And I hope that he will long gratify that wish," answered Justus, with a courteous bow, as he continued on his way past his astonished interlocutor.

Ottomar, meanwhile, had gone up to the

Baroness, and, without taking the chair next to her, although it, as well as half those at the table, had long been unoccupied, said in a loud voice, as was necessary to the deaf old lady in the noise which prevailed around:

"Pardon me, Baroness, but will you allow me to trouble you with a question?"

The Baroness looked at him through her immense glasses. She knew at once what Ottomar wanted to ask, and that Baroness Holzweg must have repeated what she had told her, and she was determined not to allow herself to be mixed up in the matter.

"Ask anything you like, my dear child," she said.

"Certain rumours which are circulating in this company, about myself on the one hand, and Fräulein von Wallbach on the other, and which have come to my ears from Herr von Grieben amongst others, are traced back to you, Baroness, as Grieben has them from his aunt, Frau von Holzweg, and she asserts that she had them from you."

"That is a long preamble, my dear child," said the Baroness, to gain time.

"My question will be so much the shorter. From whom did you hear this story?"

"My dear child, all the world is talking about it!"

"I cannot be content with that answer, my dear lady; I must know the actual person."

"Then find him for yourself!" said the Baroness in her rudest tone, turning her back upon him.

Ottomar bit his lip, and went straight up to Herr von Wallbach, who, having vainly sought for some willing messenger through the whole room, now returned to the Baroness to tell her that he would go and look for the carriage himself.

"Baroness Kniebreche has commissioned me to discover the actual person who has set in motion certain rumours about myself and your sister. Am I to find him in the person of that sister's brother?"

"Really, Werben," said Herr von Wallbach, who had turned very pale, "this is not the place to talk about such things."

"That comes rather late, it seems to me, from you, who have spoken of it here, as it appears, not once, but often, and with many people. However, I have naturally no desire to enter into a controversy, but simply to make sure of the fact that this story, impossible as it seems, emanates from you."

"But really, Werben, I may have—it is just possible—made some communication to our old friend Baroness Kniebreche."

"Pardon me one moment, Herr von Wallbach. Herr von Lassberg, would you be so kind as to come here for a minute to hear an explanation which Herr von Wallbach will be good enough to give me? You say, Herr von Wallbach, that it is quite possible you may have made a certain communication to our old friend Baroness Kniebreche. Will you oblige me by going on?"

"I really do not know what communication you are thinking of!" cried Herr von Wallbach.

"Do you mean to compel me to mention names?" asked Ottomar, with a scornful movement of his lip, whilst his flashing eyes seemed to pierce Herr von Wallbach's, who stood there helpless, in painful perplexity.

"I think this is sufficient," said Ottomar, turning to his companion; "of course, I will put you *au courant* at once. Herr von Wallbach, you will hear more from me to-morrow, for to-day I have the honour——"

Ottomar took his companion by the arm, and walked back to his place with him, talking to him with passionate eagerness, whilst Wallbach was surrounded by several of his acquaintances, who from a distance had watched the scene between him and Ottomar, and now wished, with all discretion, to know

what had passed between him and his "brother-in-law."

"I cannot engage myself without first speaking to Herr von Werben," Bertalda was just saying, her eyes shining with the desire to dance with the handsome young Italian.

"Are you engaged to that gentleman?" asked Antonio.

"No, but he brought me here in his carriage, and is to take me back again. He wanted to go before. There he comes, ask him—or I will do so myself."

Ottomar, who had just parted with his companion, with a shake of the hand and the words, "To-morrow, then, at eight," was now close to them.

"This gentleman—Herr Antonio Michele, wishes to dance the next waltz with me," said Bertalda. "They are dancing upstairs quite merrily."

Ottomar did not answer immediately. He had already once or twice looked at Antonio, who had sat corner-wise to him at the artists' table, without being able to recollect where he had seen that handsome dark face before. Now as he looked into the black eyes, he knew it was in Justus's studio. This was Justus's Italian assistant, whom Ferdinanda had warned him against, of whom she

had said that he persecuted her with his love, that she trembled before his jealousy! In the black eyes which were fastened upon him there gleamed, in spite of the courteous smile upon the lips, an evil flame, as of hate and jealousy mingled. An inexpressible mixed feeling of contempt, disgust and terror passed through Ottomar. After all he had already suffered this evening, that this should be added!

"I must beg you to excuse the lady," he said in his haughtiest tone; "I was just going to offer her my carriage to return home in."

Antonio had discovered long ago from the artists, who were greater frequenters of the theatre than himself, who Bertalda was.

"I will see the lady safely home by-and-by," he said, with an equivocal smile.

The blood flew into Ottomar's face.

"Insolent fellow!" he cried between his teeth, as he lifted his hand.

Antonio started back and put his hand to his breast pocket. Bertalda threw herself almost into Ottomar's arms, and drew him on one side. At that moment, a perfect swarm of men, who had assembled for a game of pool in the billiard-room, poured into the conservatory between the disputants.

Their startled countenances, their violent

gesticulations, their loud and confused words, all proclaimed that something unusual had occurred, and that they brought terrible news. But the terrible news had already spread from the other side—from the vestibule into the supper-room. It had already reached the dancers above, who were hastening down the broad stairs, whilst many others met them from the supper-room. "Is it possible?—Have you heard?—Good heavens!—Pretty work!—Who would have thought it?—A man like that!—Let us get away—No one can get away till the house has been searched!—We shall see about that!—Good gracious! where is papa?—A glass of water. For heaven's sake! don't you hear?"

No one heard. Neither the servants, nor the guests, who were streaming out of the rooms into the vestibule and cloak-room, where there was soon a positively dangerous crowd.

It was in vain that some calmer people attempted to quiet the mob; in vain that the released police officer and his men tried to stem the current. The terrified people crowded in confused masses from the brightly-illuminated house, which was still echoing with the noise of the festival, into the dark streets, through which the midnight storm was howling.

BOOK VI.

CHAPTER I.

"HAS Friedrich not come back yet?"

"No, General."

August, who had his hand already upon the door, was just leaving the room.

"One moment!" said the General.

August obeyed with a face of much embarrassment; the General had come close up to him, and there was in his countenance, not anger, as August assured himself by one nervous glance upwards, but something peculiar; while the deep tones of his voice did not sound peremptory but very strange, thought August.

"It is of great importance to me to know where my son is at this moment; Friedrich will perhaps not return immediately, and I

am losing precious time. You do not know where Friedrich was to take the things?"

The faithful fellow trembled, and his broad, honest face quivered as if tears were not far off; it was only with an effort that he could answer: "Yes, General; Friedrich told me, and he has already two or three times had to take things there when the Lieutenant did not come home; she is called Fräulein Bertalda, and lives in —— Street, and is, with all due respect, a person who——"

"Good!" said the General, "you need not send Friedrich to me now. It is possible that I may require to send you out. Be ready, therefore!"

"Breakfast will be ready, General——"

"I shall not breakfast to-day."

"Fräulein Sidonie was coming to speak to you, sir; can she come now?"

"I am very sorry—I am busy—you must tell Fräulein Sidonie."

The General turned back into the room. August, in his heartfelt anxiety, longed to say: "If only our young lady were here!" But he did not venture, and so slipped out.

"Part of it was true then," murmured the General, "so I suppose the rest will be also."

He went up to his writing-table, on which lay an open letter that he had received a

quarter of an hour before from Herr von Wallbach. Bending over it in vague bewilderment, supporting himself by one hand on the table, he almost mechanically perused it again, then raised himself with a long-drawn breath and passed his hand over his bushy brows, as if trying to sweep away from his mind, like a bad dream, the fearful thing which he read there. Not merely what he read! between the lines there flitted to and fro terrible things which he himself had mentally inserted whilst he read, as in a bad dream the most dreadful part is not in the images which a terror-stricken imagination calls up, but in the expectation of horrors that are still to come. And yet! what more could come, when an alliance with the Werben family was declined as dishonourable! when satisfaction was denied to a Werben!

The latter point, as the most comprehensible, was that to which the unhappy man's wandering thoughts returned and clung most persistently.

A betrothal broken off was a thing that had happened before and might happen again; it was a trifle even, a mere nothing, if only honour were untouched by it, if only Ottomar could stake his life upon his unimpeachable honour. Might not Wallbach's

cowardice—he had always thought the man a coward—be taking advantage of Ottomar's difficulties, which "had reached a height and assumed a character that made it dubious, at least, if Herr von Werben were still entitled to demand satisfaction as an officer and a gentleman, or even from the standpoint of ordinary honesty."

This must be cleared away! He had thought since that last affair, when in the autumn he had paid the bills which had come into his hands, that everything was settled, since no more bills had been presented to him —he had erred, grossly erred. Ottomar in his need had drawn more bills—he himself was the cause of Ottomar being in such need! —why had he at that time so sternly refused him any further assistance? Might he not have known that such embarrassment cannot be at once ended? that when a man's true friends refused their assistance he would turn to false friends who would ruthlessly make profit out of his position, as had evidently been the case here? No matter, no matter! all should be forgiven and forgotten, if Ottomar would only confide in him again, would only allow him to put things straight o r him again, as he had so often done. But could he do so? Counting all that he

possessed, he could not make up more than about ten thousand thalers. That might not be enough; as much again might perhaps be wanted; it should be found then, it must be found—it must! Ottomar had evidently sent his man for his sash that he might make the necessary communication to his colonel of what had occurred. Herr von Bohl would of course require that the money difficulties should be settled before bringing the matter before a court of honour. He himself would then become surety to the fullest extent for Ottomar's debts; their old friend would for once—once more! not look too closely into it; he would accept the surety and let the matter rest till all was settled. If only Ottomar would not now, at this very time, let himself be led into taking steps—that must be the meaning of the obscure part of Wallbach's letter; what else could the man mean? —steps which could only increase the difficulty of arranging the business. That an officer should put his name to a bill with the most exorbitant interest — that was, alas! for Ottomar no new thing! The fact that he had sent for plain clothes as well as for his sash appeared to point to some such intention. There was not a moment to lose! he had lost only too many in his first bewilderment!

The General rang the bell. He was himself in plain clothes this morning, as he usually had been since his retirement; he would put on his uniform. It would take him a few minutes longer, but he always felt a little want of confidence without his uniform, and there must be no want of confidence to-day. As August still did not come after he had rung a second time, he was about to go to his bedroom, when there came a knock at the door, and on his irritable "Come in!" Captain von Schönau entered the room.

"I beg your pardon, General," said Schönau, "for coming in unannounced, but I did not find your servant outside, and my errand here will bear of no delay."

The perfect calmness and concentrated energy which generally marked the Captain's well-cut features had given place to an expression of the deepest anxiety and trouble.

"You come about Ottomar's affairs?" said the General, mastering his fears, and stretching out his hand to the Captain.

"Yes, General, and I beg and implore you to allow me to keep silence as to how I obtained my knowledge of the state of his affairs. But the state is this, that without any delay whatever, and before the matter comes to Herr von Bohl's knowledge, those

bills of Ottomar's which are due to-day, and are in the hands of a banker here, whose address I know, must be paid. I know also the total of them. The sum is large, so large that so far as I know, General, neither you nor I alone could pay it; but together we might find it possible if, as I do not doubt, you will put at my disposal all that you can lay your hands upon, and will allow me to take the further management of the affair into my own hands and deal with it as if it were mine."

Schönau had spoken with decision, but in breathless haste, and the General could not doubt but that the Captain's thoughts had taken the same direction as his own. So long as Ottomar was left to himself, and attempted to save himself in his usual fashion, any delay could only increase the difficulties of his position, perhaps make it impossible for his friends, with the best will in the world, to help him. However painfully his pride was wounded by the conviction that he could not avert the threatening danger by his own efforts, he had made up his mind, even while Schönau was speaking, to accept the help so generously offered to him, supposing that he found it possible to repay the debt thus incurred. This he expressed in the fewest

words, at the same time explaining the state of his finances and naming the sum which at the utmost could be raised upon the security of his interest in his house.

"Will that suffice?" he asked, "and for how much shall I be indebted to you?"

"It will suffice," said Schönau; "and I only ask now for a line to your banker, giving me full powers."

"You have not answered my last question," said the General, as with rapid pen he wrote the required words.

"I must beg you to excuse me from answering," replied Schönau; "be satisfied that the remainder does not surpass my means, and that it will be an honour and a pride to me to be able to serve you and your family."

The young man's steady clear voice faltered as he said the last words.

As the General continued writing, he remembered that amongst their friends Schönau's and Elsa's names had been often coupled together in jest, with the regret that it might not be done in earnest, as the two were far too good friends ever to fall in love with each other. He had shared this view, not without some regret. Could he have been mistaken? Could Schönau—it would be no

detraction from his generosity—be offering help less to the father of his friend than to the father of the girl he loved? In the excited state of his mind these thoughts had taken no more time than was required to carry his hand from the end of one line to the beginning of another; and moved by the sudden consideration, he stopped in his writing, and looked up at Schönau who stood by him.

A sad smile played round the Captain's firmly-closed lips.

"Do not stop, General," said he; "I desire and expect nothing, I assure you, but the continuation of your friendship and that of your belongings."

The General compressed his lips and went on writing. It was bitter—most bitter to him to have to take everything from the full hands of this generous friend, with no power of returning to him anything from his own empty ones—it was too bitter! A cloud came over his eyes; he was forced to break off.

"There is nothing but the signature wanting," urged Schönau, leaning over his shoulder.

"I cannot do it, Schönau!" said the General.

"I implore you," cried the Captain, "life and death hang upon it—oh! my God!"

Startled by a sound at the door, he had turned and saw Colonel von Bohl enter the room.

"Too late!" muttered Schönau; and then, with a desperate effort to save what was already lost: "Your signature, General!"

But the General had turned round, and had seen the Colonel. Ottomar then had been to him already—had told him everything; the affair could go no further without consultation with his commanding officer.

The Colonel's usually severe military aspect had the stamp of a solemn gravity upon it now, as he said, after briefly apologising for his intrusion:

"Have the goodness, my dear Schönau, to leave us. I have a communication to make to the General which will admit of no delay, and which I must make without witnesses."

A word trembled upon Schönau's lips, but he restrained himself, and only bowed and said:

"Certainly, Colonel!" and then turning to the General: "May I ask permission to pay my respects meanwhile to Fräulein Sidonie?" then, after a little pause: "In case you should

wish, however, to see me again, I think my visit will be a long one."

He bowed again and went. The General looked after him with fixed, terrified eyes. Evidently there was some understanding between Schönau and the Colonel, although they had not spoken to one another yet; evidently both knew something that Schönau had not said, and that the Colonel had now come to say. He shuddered as before when he had laid down Wallbach's letter; again there came upon him that agony of fear, only now it was no longer lingering at the threshold; now it had come close to him in the person of this iron soldier, in whom, though he had never formed any intimacy with him socially, he had always seen and honoured the pattern of a soldier after his own heart. The door was shut behind Schönau.

"I know all," cried the General; and said to himself, at the same moment, that he had spoken falsely.

The Colonel shook his head.

"You do not know all, General; Schönau could not tell you all, or rather, as I suspect from his manner, would not tell you all."

"Then I am prepared for anything," said the General in a hollow voice.

Again the Colonel shook his head.

"I wish you were, but I think it is impossible. You must be prepared for the worst; your son's bills, which fall due to-day, are all forgeries."

The General fell back as if he had been shot, his hands convulsively grasping the air. The Colonel sprang forward to save him from falling, but with a frightful effort the unhappy man recovered himself before the other could touch him, and stammered: "I—I thank you —it is over—it is——"

He could say no more, he could bear no more, but fell back into his chair, pressing his cold hands to his throbbing temples, and muttering with bloodless lips: "It is all over —all over!"

The Colonel, who could only with great difficulty retain his own composure, drew forward a chair, and said:

"It is terrible, I can offer you no word of consolation, for I know only too well that you will not take it as an extenuating circumstance that it was your name, his father's name, in and by which the fraud was carried out."

"You are right, quite right," said the General; "the fact is irrelevant—absolutely irrelevant."

Had he understood? Did he know what

he was saying? The Colonel, who had not taken his eyes off him, almost doubted; the dark eyes, usually so steady, stared vacantly into nothing; the voice that had formerly been so strong and decided, sounded harsh and wavering as if his mind were giving way; the Colonel thought it best to recall him to a sense of the reality, however terrible, by a relation of the circumstances.

He related, therefore, in his dry way, that Ottomar had come to him at about ten o'clock, and had immediately on his entrance announced to him, with the calmness of utter, hopeless despair, that he had that morning sent a challenge by Herr von Lassberg to Herr von Wallbach, on account of certain reports, now current in society, concerning on the one hand his relations with Fräulein Ferdinanda Schmidt, and on the other Fräulein von Wallbach's conduct with Count Golm, which reports could only have originated with Herr von Wallbach. That Herr von Wallbach, without further reference to the truth or untruth of these reports, or to his share in spreading them, had refused satisfaction, until Herr von Werben had cleared himself from the suspicion of having lately made use of improper methods to free himself from his money difficulties. He, Herr von Wallbach,

would of course be ready to give satisfaction for this insinuation touching his honour in case it should not be substantiated.

"Unfortunately," continued the Colonel, "Herr von Wallbach was but too sure of his facts. His informant, whose name, I know not from what consideration, he refused to mention even to Herr von Lassberg, could only be, according to your son's assertion, the very man with whose assistance this miserable fraud has been carried out; a man whose name, if I remember rightly, has been often mentioned lately in the Wallbach circle—Signor Giraldi."

"Impossible!" exclaimed the General. "My son could not—impossible!"

"I beg your pardon, General," said the Colonel, "I am repeating to you exactly the account which I received from your son's mouth, and which I believe to be perfectly truthful. According to him, from the first moment of their acquaintance, Signor Giraldi manifested the most lively interest in your son. Herr von Werben intimated also that Signor Giraldi had known and encouraged his passion for a certain lady; but he did not go further upon this point, only added that these, as he believed, equally treacherous efforts had proved absolutely useless. Although from

his agitation Herr von Werben's account omitted some details, I must suppose that he has been, with regard to his money affairs, also the innocently guilty victim of a villain who has mercilessly made use of his unsuspicious and blind confidence for ends which escape my comprehension. It seems that Herr von Werben's evil genius recommended him, as the easiest means of freeing himself from his difficulties, to speculate on the Exchange, under a feigned name of course; that he enticed him into the wildest speculations, allowed him to win two or three times at first, till suddenly the luck changed and turned more and more against him; and then, as usual, bills had to be given, to which at first your son's name was put, and afterwards, as the sums grew larger, yours, General, was forged, with the help of the credit which Signor Giraldi enjoyed, although he declares himself to be without any available means. That the bills might not come into your hands too soon, they were lodged at first with various bankers, and finally with one alone whose name has unfortunately escaped me. Signor Giraldi undertook to meet them regularly as they fell due, and promised of course to meet them also to-day when the enormous sum of twenty thousand thalers is due. Herr von

Werben of course went at once, on the receipt of Herr von Wallbach's answer, to Signor Giraldi's hotel; Signor Giraldi had left in the night. From that moment Herr von Werben seems to have given up the case as hopeless. Signor Giraldi had, as you may suppose, most distinctly engaged to receive him at this hour; the people of the hotel declared that he had not so much as mentioned his destination; it was only when Herr von Werben, whose suspicions were aroused by the porter's manner, offered him a considerable bribe, that he learned from the man that Signor Giraldi had gone to Warnow, where letters were to be forwarded to him. With despair in his heart he hastened to the banker, to hear only what he had expected: that Signor Giraldi had made no arrangements for meeting the bills, which however had not yet been presented, but on the contrary had withdrawn from the bank yesterday afternoon the remainder of the very large sum—half a million, if I mistake not—which he had deposited with them. Half an hour later Herr von Werben was with me."

The Colonel paused; he could no longer endure the sight of the General, who still stared straight before him like a man bereft of his senses. What was he brooding over?

Undoubtedly upon the final end of the story, and undoubtedly also upon the same brief and bloody end which in his innermost heart he felt to be unavoidable. But this man was the father! he had not fully considered that before. He had not allowed himself to put forward any extenuating circumstance; now he ransacked his mind for any such circumstance, for any sincere word of comfort even in which he could himself have faith.

But he found none.

"Shall we ask Schönau to come in again?" said he.

The General lifted his fixed eyes, evidently not understanding why the Colonel should ask the question, having probably forgotten that Schönau was still in the house.

The Colonel did not wait for his answer, but rang the bell and desired August, who immediately appeared, having been in the kitchen giving vent to his grief to the old cook, to summon Herr von Schönau. The Captain meanwhile had been passing a most uncomfortable half-hour. With the terrible certainty that he had come too late, and that Ottomar was lost, now that he had officially informed his commanding officer of his misconduct, and that the latter, as was to be expected from his opinions and his ideas of

honour, had acquainted Ottomar's father with what had occurred; with the miserable anxiety which increased every moment till it became an unspeakable terror, that now—now—at this very moment might happen, perhaps had already happened, what must plunge his loved and honoured friends into unutterable grief, it was too painful to have to keep up a conversation with the good-humoured, unsuspecting, and talkative old lady upon indifferent or tiresome subjects, such as the bad weather, the next ball at court, or a doubtful passage in "Malortie" which had already cost the compiler of "Court Etiquette" several sleepless nights.

"And, before I forget it," said Sidonie, "have you heard yet of the shocking thing that happened last night, and of which, people tell me, the whole town is talking? I am sorry for our neighbour, poor Herr Schmidt; he is a very respectable sort of man I am told, and he keeps a man-servant who is—only think, my dear Schönau!—a cousin or something of the sort of our August, and August told us—my brother and me—since Elsa has been away he always takes his coffee with me, which he used not to do, but he is always so kind and attentive— What was I saying, my dear Schönau? oh! yes; it is

another proof to me that nothing but harm and evil can come out of societies that have once imbibed the poison of democratic tendencies. A young man who has been educated in those pernicious principles has no safeguard in the critical moments of his life such as religion and family honour, thank God, afford us. At such moment he seizes—not I dare say without some struggles—for after all we are all children of God, however few of us walk in His ways—but still he seizes upon improper, doubtful, desperate, and even criminal means. Millions, so I am told, he has stolen from a safe entrusted to him; and then to take flight at the very moment when he was giving a large party. What recklessness! what a want of the most ordinary delicacy, although, quite between ourselves, my dear Schönau, I do not think it particularly delicate of us to take part in festivities which end in such a way. I indeed might triumph, for what in the world could prove better than such occurrences how necessary is the existence of well-ordered small courts, as schools of morals and manners, of chivalry and true goodness, to our distracted and increasingly democratic society? But heaven forbid that I should feel such pride! My sentiments are those of silent

grief and tender pity, all the more that, as you know, Ottomar also could not deny himself this equivocal pleasure. When the models of modern chivalry go and dance at Herr Schmidt's, Herr Schmidt himself, indeed, is none the better for it, as we see, since a crow will always remain a crow; but the swans, my dear Schönau, I only ask you, can the swans retain their purity in such company?"

Schönau was spared the necessity of answering, as August here came to summon him, and he took his leave in a way which so little agreed with his usual irreproachable demeanour, that Sidonie, as the door closed behind him, shook her head, and opined that her little lecture would not come amiss to the Captain.

"I beg your pardon, Captain," said August, as they crossed the hall to the General's room.

Schönau looked round.

"I beg your pardon, Captain, but I am sure something has happened to our young gentleman. Could not you let a faithful servant, sir, who has been eight years in the family, and would go through fire and water for the General, or the Lieutenant, or our young lady, know what it is?"

The tears were rolling over the honest

fellow's cheeks, and Schönau's own eyes were moist.

"No," said he, "I cannot tell you. We must hope that all may yet be well."

He gave August his hand.

"God grant it!" said August, wiping his eyes with the other hand; "I don't think man can do much. But I wanted to say, too, if you wished, sir, to speak to our young gentleman, he will be at the lady's in —— Street—you know, sir."

When Schönau entered he found the two others sitting in silent meditation. At a sign from the Colonel he sat down, but, as the youngest, did not venture to break the unnatural stillness. At last the General raised his head; he seemed to the Captain to have grown years older, and his voice was dull and toneless like that of an old man.

"You are aware, Captain, what—on what account——"

The words came with difficulty from his throat.

"Yes, General," said Schönau. "Herr von Wallbach came to me this morning, with the acknowledged purpose of justi fying his conduct in the eyes of Ottomar's friends and those of his family. He was evidently playing a carefully prepared game.

For while he skilfully avoided every expression which could directly accuse Ottomar, I could plainly perceive by every word that he was absolutely certain of his facts, and that Signor Giraldi had initiated him into the minutest details of this unfortunate affair. From him also I learned the sum at stake, and the name of the banker who held the bills, who happens to be also my uncle's banker, and with whom I am personally acquainted through business which I have transacted for my uncle—Messrs. Haselow & Co. I hastened there at once, but came too late; Ottomar had just been there. I am sorry to say that his only too easily explained agitation and his distracted questions have at least startled those gentlemen, but I am convinced that I allayed any doubts by asserting positively—I was obliged as matters stood to take the liberty, General—that before this evening all bills due should be taken up. I intended then, when I had collected the money with your assistance, sir, to pay these bills, and—"

The Captain hesitated.

"To save a swindler from his just punishment," said the General, without looking up.

"To save a man whom I venerate beyond all men, from unmerited suffering," returned the Captain.

"That implies a reproach to me, Captain von Schönau!" said the Colonel, knitting his brows.

"Pardon me, Colonel, if I differ from you. I had here no office but that of friendship. You, sir, as Colonel, had received an official communication, of which you were obliged to take notice, the more so that the idea of an arrangement of the affair would not and could not strike you as it would me."

"That is to say, if I understand you rightly, that as soon as the arrangement was effected you would have considered the affair at an end? I confess that, however painful it is to me, I cannot agree with you in that view."

"Pardon me again, I did not intend to say that."

"I should be much obliged to you, Captain, if you would communicate your opinion to me without reservation, in the presence of General von Werben."

"I am obliged to you for the permission, Colonel; the whole thing turned for me upon the question of sparing as much as possible the General and his family, as they so fully deserve to be spared. This of course would require also that my friend should be spared to a certain degree. That is to say, the bills must be paid, as I hoped to be able to pay

them with the General's help, and they must be paid as the General's bills. I should then of course have required that my unhappy friend should leave the service, under some pretext that might easily have been found, and should retire absolutely into private life."

Schönau had raised his keen eyes imploringly to the Colonel, who, on his side, never turned his look from the speaker. He understood him now for the first time. In explaining his own plans the Captain had at the same time suggested the line which he wished his commanding officer to adopt as a guide to his action if not to his views. Even in this light the matter was one of great gravity, the Colonel felt and knew this well; but the sight of the venerable man before him so utterly broken down, the remembrance of Ottomar's thousand proofs of courage before the enemy, and all the tender memories and compassionate feelings which crowded upon his mind, all told him that he had already gone to his utmost length, that he could do no more, that notwithstanding what he felt to be his duty, he must accept the compromise suggested by the Captain, at any rate must refrain from putting forward the reasons against it.

"Thank you, Captain," said he; "I hope that, even as regards the claims of the service,

this most unhappy affair may be settled as you propose. I am glad on this account, that in the first shock and bewilderment, as I must confess, of what might happen next, I gave Herr von Werben three days' leave of absence, which he had requested on account of private affairs, though he entered into no particulars on the subject, nor did he confide to me the object of the journey which he must undertake in consequence. This leave of absence will be a very proper preparation for sending in his papers, which must be done at the same time with a notification of his wish to retire, and which I will undertake to support with the authorities. I only require first that the bills should meanwhile be settled by Captain von Schönau in the manner suggested."

Schönau gave the Colonel a grateful look and rose. He would not hazard the unexpectedly happy result of the interview, and he knew too well that every word further spoken now might and would endanger it.

"I am already late for my work," said he, "and I must go down to the Staff Office to ask leave of my chief for the day. I will then immediately settle the matter of the bills, if the General will have the goodness to give me his authority, and then, with your permission, inform Herr von Werben, whom

I think I know where to find, of what has been decided here. May I ask you, General?" and Schönau pointed towards the table on which lay the unsigned power of attorney.

The Colonel had risen also.

"One moment, gentlemen," said the General.

He walked up to the table, took the paper and tore it into two pieces, which he threw into the waste-paper basket.

It was done without any visible emotion, without any apparent thought of those present, as if some one alone in his study had torn up and thrown away a letter that had now become worthless. The Captain shuddered at the fall of the rustling paper, as a pitiful judge might do as he puts on the black cap.

"I thank you, gentlemen," continued the General, who seemed to have completely recovered his self-possession; "you, Colonel, for the humanity which would have extended to another man's son the mercy you would surely have denied to your own; you, my dear Schönau for the affection which would lead you to sacrifice not merely your fortune, but, like the Colonel, your conviction also.

"I cannot accept this sacrifice, gentlemen. One wrong figure spoils the sum, one

false premise nullifies the conclusion. You must allow a father to draw the inference which you from friendship and compassion would not draw. If with the assistance of Captain von Schönau—for alone it would be impossible—I took upon myself my son's fraud and thus—which God forbid!—allowed a man who is himself not rich, like you, my dear Schönau, to impoverish himself for the sake of a swindler, my son would then be allowed, there being nothing further against him, to retire with honour. His Majesty, our gracious commander-in-chief, would certify to the honour of a man, who, before God and his conscience, before his father and you, gentlemen, who cannot at this moment raise your eyes to me, is dishonoured. He could call to account those who doubted his honour, and there would be enough of them—his enemies would see to that—he who must acknowledge to himself that they are in the right, and that in the very act of demanding and receiving satisfaction he was perpetrating another deceit.

"And thus, gentlemen, the one lie—forgive me the word!—would call forth a thousand new lies; and we who sit here should have spun this web of deceit, and must leave those who become entangled in it without warning or aid.

"The situation is impossible, gentlemen! Impossible—even for my son. Guilty as he is, he cannot be so false to the blood of his ancestors as to determine to exist at the mercy of even his best and most generous friends; to live under the sword of the doubtful reputation that must precede and follow him whichever way he turned; to endure the scorn that any man might make him feel as he pleased, without the power of defending himself.

"And it is impossible—to me. Suppose to yourselves that I were the president of a court of honour which had to decide upon this case; forget for a moment that I am a father—and you would, you must answer me that it is impossible."

"I cannot forget it!" cried Schönau wildly; "I cannot!"

"You must," returned the General, "as the Colonel here has already done."

The Colonel was in the most painful embarrassment. The General was undoubtedly right, and he would thus be released from a very difficult position; and yet! and yet!

"I have already expressed my most decided wish to arrange the affair without letting matters proceed to extremities," said he. "I

hope the General may yet persuade himself of the possibility of so doing, however difficult I allow such a solution may be. Meanwhile, Herr von Werben is on leave of absence. Bills of exchange have, if I remember rightly" —the Colonel attempted a smile—"three days' law. Let us make use of this delay granted by the law; three days count for a great deal under some circumstances in the life of a man. Shall we leave the General alone now, my dear Schönau ?"

The two officers went silently down the street, with their heads bent, and from time to time pressing on their caps more firmly, which the storm that raged through the streets threatened to blow away. At the corner of the cross street Schönau said: "I must take a carriage from here, Colonel."

"You are going to him ?"

"Yes, sir."

"It is a hopeless case, my dear Schönau."

"I fear so."

"You will bring me news ?"

"Certainly, sir."

"It is eleven o'clock now; I shall be at home till two."

The Colonel pressed the Captain's hand with a warmth very unusual for him, turned up the collar of his overcoat, and went on

down the street. Schönau's cab drove quickly up the side street.

The General had remained standing at the door, to which he had accompanied the others, and listened mechanically to their steps upon the stone floor of the hall, then under the window of his room, and passing away down the street.

Now he could hear nothing more, excepting the storm which was raging without. They were gone, these men of the highest honour, the representatives of his class, gone after pronouncing sentence upon the dishonoured and unworthy member of that class.

And that sentence was—death.

Death by his own hand.

And his father must announce it to him.

No! not that; only confirm what he must have already said to himself; only say: "Your father agrees to what you have already decided upon, and may God have mercy upon your soul!"

He pressed his hands together, and heavy cold drops of sweat stood on his deeply-furrowed brow.

"Must it be? oh God, my God, have mercy upon me! must it be?"

But no word of comfort or hope came to him. All was dumb within him, in his burn-

ing head, in his panting breast, and through that dumb silence only the fearful words: "It must be!"

When August entered the room at the sound of the bell, the General was sitting, turned away from him, at his writing-table, leaning his head upon his hand. On the round table behind him, on which he used always to put his finished papers, stood a box, and on the box lay a letter.

August turned cold all over; it was the box in which his master kept the two beautiful old pistols which he had inherited from his father, and on which he set such great store.

"My son is obliged to undertake a long journey," said the General; "and he will require my pistols. The key is in the letter. You will go to him at once, and take him the box and the letter; there is no further message, the letter contains everything. Afterwards I shall go away also; when you come back you will put up my things for a few days' absence."

"Very well, General," said August, merely to say something, and so perhaps to get free of the horror which oppressed him.

With mechanical obedience he had carefully taken up the letter and box, and stopped at the door.

"Shall I say anything kind from you to the Lieutenant, sir?"

There was a few moments' pause before the answer came.

He mustered all his courage:

"Tell him, I hope to God to be with him soon again."

The faithful servant breathed again. He was satisfied now; whatever had happened between the General and the Lieutenant must be something very bad, much worse than it had ever been before, but if the General hoped to meet the Lieutenant again, and that very soon too, there was nothing to break one's heart over, and it would soon be all right, as the Captain had said indeed.

But when August had left the room, the General let his head fall upon his clasped hands, and so sat for a long time, while his whole frame was shaken at times as if with ague, or at others a dull groan was forced from his oppressed breast, as he prayed for his son's soul, and took leave of that son of whom he had been so proud, and who might no longer live now with the shame that he had brought upon himself; the son whom he had so dearly loved, and whom he still loved, oh! how dearly!

At last he rose, an old, broken-down man,

with but one thing more for him to do on earth.

For that, he knew that his strength would suffice.

And not trembling and with burning tears as he had loaded the pistol which he sent to his son, but with a steady hand and rigid flaming eyes did he load the second, with which to shoot down the scoundrel who with devilish cunning had enticed his son to disgrace and death.

CHAPTER II.

FERDINANDA had gone to-day, as usual, at her accustomed hour to the studio, and had even attempted to work; but, in spite of the determination which she had long exercised in subduing her talent to her will, and the success which had often attended her efforts, the struggle was vain to-day, and she threw down her tools again.

"For the last time," said she to herself.

She had meant for to-day; but the words, as she spoke them aloud, sounded strangely in the great, high room, as if not she but some one else had said them—a ghostly, prophetic voice speaking from far off, that left her standing and listening in terror lest the voice should speak again.

What need was there of a prophetic voice

to convince her of what her own broken heart had said long since?

It was all in vain—her efforts, her struggles, her renunciation, vain—even the tender remonstrances, the gentle warnings, the bright example of the saintly Cilli herself!

How often and often, when that angelic being had left her, had she thrown herself in the dust before the Pietà, which she had modelled two months ago from her, and prayed that the all-merciful love with which the heart of the blind girl overflowed might descend upon her heart too, if it were only a drop! Even that would suffice to extinguish the flames that raged there! But in vain.

Yesterday evening would have proved that, had proof been needed.

How she had debated whether she would accept that girl's invitation, and see him again whom she had solemnly sworn never more to see! She had kept her oath, and had fled at the last moment.

But was such a flight to be called a victory? Had she not been conquered—did she not lie here helpless, shattered, bleeding? Her deadly wound had never been healed, only insufficiently and with difficulty bound up; and now she had torn off the bandages, and

might bleed to death! There was no more hope for her.

All else within was dull, dead, and insensible. She had fancied that she felt a kind of respect for Philip's activity and daring—that she was bound to him by at least a feeble bond of fraternal love. And yet this morning, when Aunt Rikchen had brought the terrible news, and had wept and lamented so that it might have moved a heart of stone, she had not even been touched. She had received it like any other piece of sensational intelligence which her aunt was in the habit of reading out of the newspaper and making remarks upon. She seemed turned to stone in the selfishness of her passion, so that it had not even occurred to her to go to her father and say to him, "You have still one child, father."

But could she have said that without lying—was she still at heart the child of the man who, in an hour of madness, had obtained from her that letter of renunciation, every syllable of which had been like a poisoned arrow in her heart? Had he attempted to compensate her, in some measure at least, for so enormous, so unsurpassable a sacrifice, by multiplying his own love to her a hundredfold? Perhaps his pride forbade him that, or he shrank from hers, which he knew so well.

Well, then, she was well acquainted with his pride too. She could see his expression if she went to him in his room; she could hear his voice saying, "You have come to me about that wretched man; I wish to hear nothing more about the matter than is, unfortunately, necessary for me to hear. In my house at least I may be spared; so as you have come to see me at last, talk of something else."

No, no, her father did not need her; and for herself! others might importune him with their troubles, and humble themselves before him—her proud father's prouder daughter would sooner die a martyr at the stake!

Cilli was better off. She was sitting now beside her father's sick-bed, and listening patiently to his childish complaints of how foolish he had been to believe in Philip, and how just was the punishment that the savings of many years, so carefully accumulated in a thousand frugal ways, and by unceasing self-denial through so many long years, should have been lost in one night, with the millions of the gambler on whose cards he had staked his little fortune! Then she would comfort the old man, and believe every word that came from her pure lips. And in secret she had another comfort, at which she only hinted sometimes in mysterious words, as if she were

ashamed of such divine help—the comfort of believing that, as one consecrated to early death, she needed no earthly consolation.

She might well be secure of that consolation! How transparent her white skin had grown in the last few weeks; how spiritually beautiful the expression of her pure features; how unearthly the look of her great, blind eyes!

Oh, how happy she was! To die so young, before the faintest stain had marred even the hem of her white robes! To find above, if there was anything above—and for her there must surely be—a heaven which she had already created for herself on earth in her pure, humble heart! To rise from joy to bliss—from light into glory! Oh, how happy she was!

And she herself, most miserable! That world above was only a beautiful fable to her ever since her restless brain had begun to work behind her burning brow. Her passionate heart had once desired to possess all earthly joy as the sea receives into its bosom the streams which roll gleefully and exultingly into it, and now it was pining away like the barren desert under a sky of brass; and her vigorous form seemed made to drag the weary burden of life through the never-ending

years to a far-distant, desolate grave, like some captive hero who, bending under the heavy load bound upon his strong shoulders, may not hope to break down or fall beneath the lash of his driver like his weaker companion, but must throw away his load, and turn upon his tormentors, crying, "You or I!"

But there was no alternative here. Death was very sure for those who did not fear it!

Did she fear death?

She!

With this chisel, with the first tool from off her table, she would accomplish it with her own hand, if——

If within her deepest, inmost heart, where some spring that she had thought dried up must still be bubbling, a siren voice had not wailed and whispered: "Do not die! for so you would kill me, the last and mightiest of all the sisters. Only one moment is mine, and there is night before me and after me; but this one moment surpasses the bliss of eternity!"

In the next room to her had been noise and whistling and singing the whole morning, louder than usual, as the master had been absent to-day; and there had been much talk as to whether, when there was a Mrs. Sculptor—some wit had suggested this—

things would be quite so lively in the studio. Now all was still, only the storm howled and raged round the silent house, and shook and rattled the tall windows.

How had he endured the disappointment of yesterday? Was he raging like the storm without? Was he the storm? Was it he who tapped at the window-pane, and knocked at the door? Good heavens! there was really a knock at the door! Was it possible! had he at last, at last broken the final fetter, and come here to carry her away?

With trembling limbs she rose, her heart beating as if it would break in joyful terror.

There again! at the closed window now! and was there not a cry, "Ferdinanda?"

With a shriek she rushed forward, tore back the bolts, flung open the door: "Bertalda! Good God! he is dead!"

"Not yet," said Bertalda, "but he is not far off it."

The girl's usually laughing rosy face was pale and changed; she was breathless from the haste she had made, and could hardly bring out her words, as with trembling knees she sank into the nearest chair.

"He is ill! where? in your house? for God's sake, Bertalda, speak!"

Ferdinanda stood before the girl, pressing her hands in hers, and putting back the ruffled hair from her brow.

"Speak! speak!"

"There is not much to say," said Bertalda, raising herself up, "only you must come with me at once, or he will shoot himself. He wanted to do it before, and now his own father sends him a pistol to do it with! There is an officer—Schönau is his name—with him now; but those sort of people talk such nonsense—America! I dare say! He will never leave my room if you do not come to him and tell him that you would remain with him if he had forged his father's name for a hundred thousand instead of this miserable twenty thousand. Why, my goodness! an Englishman once offered me forty thousand, but I didn't like him, so there was an end of it; but these men are all like children with their foolish ideas of honour. I only tell you that you may not be startled by anything, because you, too, are so absurd about such things, and if you only look— There! you are just like the others; you are heartless, the whole lot of you."

Bertalda said all this behind Ferdinanda's back, as the latter after her first words was moving wildly about the studio, looking for

her things, and now stood still with her hand pressed to her forehead.

"If only I were you," said Bertalda, "I would go with him to the devil if he would take me. He is not wise, he would get more from me than from you. Why did I sit with him and comfort him all night long, when I was dead tired and might have been sleeping in my comfortable bed—or on the sofa even, or the carpet?—it would be all the same to me, if only the poor boy were at ease. And this morning again! I should like to see the woman who would go through it for her husband! That would be a fine fuss! and I, like a good-humoured fool, agree to everything, and persuade him instead of shooting himself to go to Sundin, and farther on—I don't know the name of the place—and shoot Count Golm, merely to change the current of his thoughts, for he does not care one bit about his so-called betrothed—and then I rush headlong here, and—well, what do you want?"

Ferdinanda had hardly heard or understood a word of Bertalda's rambling speech. She had been pulling out and ransacking drawers from the desk which stood in a corner of her studio near the window, and now sitting down opened her blotting-book.

"What are you about?" repeated Bertalda.

"I have enough to begin with," said Ferdinanda, still writing; "a thousand thalers! There! take up the packet—thank God! I only received it yesterday."

"That is always something to begin with," said Bertalda; "I had already offered him what I had, but of course he would not take it from me. But do let that scribbling alone. What are you doing now?"

"Here!" cried Ferdinanda.

She folded the paper on which she had been writing, and held it out to Bertalda.

"What am I to do with it?"

"Take it to my father, whilst I go to Ottomar."

"Oh! I dare say!" said Bertalda. "I am not generally afraid of people, but I won't have anything to do with your father. Just leave it there. Some one will find it and give it to him, and if not it can't be helped."

"I will give it to him," said a gentle voice.

Ferdinanda started up with a cry, as she saw Cilli, who had entered as usual by the door which led from the studio into the narrow passage between the house and garden, and unnoticed by the others had been present for some minutes, and had heard with

her quick ears every word of the latter part of their conversation.

"Oh! my better self, my good angel," cried Ferdinanda; "you are come to tell me that I am doing right, that I may, that I ought to follow him as my heart tells me, through shame and grief, through misery and death!"

"And may God be with you!" said Cilli, laying her hands on Ferdinanda's head, who had thrown herself on her knees before her; —"with you both! He only asks for love, and yet again for love, the love that beareth all things. You can now—you can both now prove that your love is true love! Give me the letter to your father! and farewell!"

She bent down and kissed Ferdinanda on the forehead, as the other rose sobbing and gave the letter into her hand.

"You look so pale, Cilli, and your dear hands are cold as ice. Is your father very ill?"

"He is very ill; but the doctor says he will get over it. He is asleep now—Aunt Rikchen is with him, so I have plenty of time."

She smiled her own sad sweet smile.

"And now, farewell! for the last time!"

"Come," cried Bertalda impatiently;

"come, we have lost only too much time already! Whatever you want besides I can supply you with."

Ferdinanda was forced to tear herself away from Cilli. In her own passionate way she had learned within the last few weeks to love, and honour, and even worship the fair being who had come to her, as the good Samaritan came to the wounded man in the burning desert sand. An inward foreboding warned her that this was a farewell for ever, that she should never again behold these angelic features. And to-day the face in its transparent clearness seemed hardly that of an earthborn creature.

Was she who seemed fragile as a breath, who was like a ray of light from a better world upon this dark sinful earth, to take this earthly burden upon her slender shoulders, to touch with her pure hands these dark sorrows.

"I will go to my father myself!" cried Ferdinanda.

"Then you may just as well stay here altogether," said Bertalda.

"Go, go!" said Cilli.

And now again it was Ferdinanda who thought that Bertalda could not quickly enough put on the cloak which she had thrown off in the hot studio, or find the

bonnet which she had flung down anywhere.

"I called a cab as I came," said Bertalda; "it is waiting at the door; we shall be at my house in five minutes." At the house door there were two cabs waiting.

Bertalda helped Ferdinanda to get into the first, and was in the act of following her, when the driver of the second carriage asked whether the gentleman was not coming.

"What gentleman?"

"The one who called me. Doesn't he belong to you?"

"I know nothing about him," said Bertalda, getting in and shutting the door behind her.

The vehicle was hardly in motion before Antonio came out of the house, with a broad-brimmed hat upon his black hair, and a large cloak over his shoulders—he had brought them both from Italy, and they were the first things which he had laid his hands upon—and with a small travelling-bag under his cloak into which he had thrust a change of linen. He rushed up to the driver of the second cab:

"I told you to wait at the corner!"

"I thought as there was another one at the door, and I had seen you run in here—"

"No matter—follow that cab—at the same distance that we are now, not a step nearer, and when the other stops, pull up!"

"All right," said the driver, "I understand."

CHAPTER III.

THE door closed behind the retreating figures, and Cilli was left alone in the studio. She sat down on a low stool, holding in her lap the paper which Ferdinanda had given her, and supporting her head upon her hand.

"He will not understand it," she murmured; "he will be very angry; no one will understand it, not even Reinhold himself; even he could not feel with me as I feel. Oh! my poor heart, why do you throb so wildly? Can you not bear it a little longer, only a little longer? Let me fulfil this, it may be your last service!"

She had pressed her two hands against her bosom, as with stoical fortitude she bore the fearful pain, the agonising breathlessness caused by her palpitating heart, as had so often happened in the last few days. The

terrible attack passed off, but the exhaustion which followed was so great, that she made several vain efforts to rise. She succeeded at last, and feeling for the table on which she knew a jug of water and glasses always stood, drank some water.

"I can do it now," she murmured. And yet she often thought she must break down, as she languidly put one weary foot before the other, and slowly, slowly groped her way from the studio, and through the narrow path between the house and garden. As she passed the door of her own dwelling, she stood still and listened at the foot of the stairs which led to their rooms above. All was still, and her father was sleeping under good Aunt Rikchen's care. He would not miss her; her poor father did not even know that her dearest wish, that she might die after him, and so remain with him till he breathed his last, and spare him the pain of seeing his child die, could hardly now be fulfilled. Her poor father! and yet not so poor as the proud lonely man to whom she was going.

She had reached the house and got as far as the carpeted marble stairs. A step came down towards her, and she stood still, leaning against the balustrade and smiling up at the new comer.

"Dear Grollmann!"

"Good gracious, Fräulein Cilli! How came you here? And how ill you look! Dear me! you ought to go to bed at once!"

"I have no time for that, dear Grollmann, but I do feel very weak; will you help me up the stairs?"

"Why, where do you want to go?"

"To him—to Herr Schmidt."

Grollmann shook his head.

"Dear Fräulein Cilli, you know that I would do anything in the world to please you, and particularly to-day, when you are in such trouble about your good father; but you really cannot possibly go to Herr Schmidt. If you want anything for your good father—and he has been asking after him already, although he has so many things on his mind—I will take an opportunity of saying it—"

"It is not about my father," said Cilli, "nor about myself, but I have such difficulty in speaking, dear Grollmann."

The old servant was awestruck as she raised her blind eyes to him. He did not venture another word of reply, not even to ask her what was that paper which she had slipped inside her dress, and led her silently and carefully up the remaining steps to the master's door.

"Shall I announce you, Fräulein?" he whispered.

"Only open the door, dear Grollmann."

The old man hesitated for a moment, and then opened the door boldly, guided the blind girl across the threshold with outstretched arm, without himself entering, closed the door behind her, and dropped into a chair close by, resting his chin upon his hands.

"I must take the poor child downstairs again," he muttered; "she will not stay long."

Uncle Ernst, who was walking up and down the room with his hands behind his back, lost in sullen meditation, had not heard the gentle opening of the door. Now, having reached the farther end of the room, he turned and started.

"Cilli!" he exclaimed with a long-drawn breath.

"Cilli," he repeated, as he went up to her, where she silently awaited him.

He was standing before her, strangely moved by the contrast between the dark and dismal thoughts in which he had been plunged, and the angelic, radiant face into which he now looked; and his hand, which had taken hers, trembled, and his voice shook, as he led her to a chair and said: "What brings

you to me, my child? Is your father worse?"

"I think not," answered Cilli, "although I know that he cannot last long."

"That is all stuff and nonsense," said Uncle Ernst, the gentleness of his tone contrasting oddly with the rough words. "Those three hundred pounds would not have made you happy. And what have I done to him that he should be afraid that I would not take care of him and you if it came to the worst?—his Socialism—pooh! He will always remain for me what he is—one of the few honest men in a world of rogues."

"I know how kind you are," answered Cilli, "and I had meant to come to you this morning to thank you from the bottom of my heart for all that you have done for us, and will do for my poor father when I am gone."

"I will not hear anything about that," said Uncle Ernst.

The ghost of a smile flitted over Cilli's pale face.

"Death has an eloquent voice," said she; "I trusted to that when I dragged myself to you, and hoped that my voice, which comes from a heart where Death has taken up his abode, might penetrate to your heart, which,

stern as it often seems, is so good and kind to the poor and desolate, to the helpless and the unhappy."

Her voice was so low that Uncle Ernst had some difficulty in understanding her. What did the poor child want? she had evidently something still upon her mind.

"Tell me what it is, Cilli," said he; "you know that I can refuse you nothing, however difficult it might be to me to grant it."

"You ought not to refuse me this, although it will be difficult to you; for you are very proud, and the noblest of the angels fell through pride, and your pride is bleeding already to-day from a deep wound — forgive me if I touch it—I know it must be painful, but our Lord upon the cross forgave His persecutors, forgave all men, and all who sin, however wise they may be in worldly wisdom, they know not what they do. But he who sins in men's eyes because he loves, not himself but another, to whom his whole heart and soul belong, so that he no longer feels his own pangs but suffers a hundredfold from those of another—for such a poor loving soul every good man feels divine compassion; how should not a father then, who ought to stand in the place of the Father in heaven to His children on earth, and should be perfect

even as the Father in heaven is perfect! Oh! have compassion upon Ferdinanda!"

She had slipped from her chair on to her knees, her hands crossed upon her breast, her sightless eyes turned to him who had always moved about in the darkness that surrounded her like a demon in his height and stateliness, but fearful also as a demon. Had her feeble voice reached the unattainable height where he was enthroned? or reached it only to unloose the storm, the thunder of his wrath, which she had so often heard rolling and raging above her head? Would he stoop down to her and raise her up, as he had raised so many from the dust, with his strong helpful hands? Then she heard—by his long-drawn breathing—that he was bending over her, and she felt the strong hands raise her and replace her carefully in her chair. She took his powerful hands in her own weak trembling ones, and guided them to her quivering lips.

"No, no, my child! You have spoken the truth, but I am not angry with you—not in the least. And that paper there, did she give you that?"

"I do not know what she has written," said Cilli, taking the paper from her bosom, "You ought not to look at the words; they

are wild, perhaps bad words! but how can a poor human creature know at such a moment what she does or says?"

He had hastily run his eye over the lines. "Ferdinanda has eloped—when?"

"About half an hour ago—perhaps more; I do not know exactly."

"Did he carry her off?"

Cilli, from whom Ferdinanda had long had no secrets, mentioned Bertalda's name and residence.

"So even this time it was not himself!" murmured Uncle Ernst with a bitter smile. "Thank you, my dear child, thank you for your honesty. I have always thought highly of you, I see that I did not think nearly highly enough. And now let me call my sister to take you back and see you into bed; I am sure you ought to be there."

"She is sitting at my father's bedside," said Cilli; "she has been there these two hours. I can go very well alone."

"Then I will take you."

"If you are really grateful to me, if I am not to think that I have been here in vain, you have something else to do now; pray let me go alone."

She rose from her chair and folded her hands again upon her bosom.

"Go alone then, if you really wish it."

She moved slowly to the door, there stood still, and turning round raised both hands with an imploring gesture to him, as he gazed sadly and gloomily after her, then felt for the handle. The door opened from the outside. Grollmann, as before, stretched out his arm without crossing the threshold, received Cilli's groping hand in his, and shut the door behind her.

"They are all leagued together against me for good or evil," murmured Uncle Ernst; "Reinhold, Rike, that old man, all, all! And she, good child, who is probably worth more than all of us, she brings me this with her pure innocent hands—this!"

He stared fixedly at the paper which he held in his hand.

"I bid you farewell—for ever! You do not need my love, and yours I have sufficiently experienced! You have crushed my heart and broken my spirit; you have ruthlessly sacrificed my heart, my soul, my love to your pride, as a fanatical priest slaughters the lamb at the altar of his gods. And that other—his father! Truly when the spirit has been killed, it is an act of mercy to kill the body! Wrap yourself then in your pharisaic virtues, enjoy your arrogant pride!

For us, welcome disgrace! welcome shame! welcome death!"

"So be it then—death!"

He tore the paper in half, and tore the pieces again and again, flung the fragments on the floor, put his hands behind his back, and began once more to pace up and down the room as he had been doing when Cilli came in.

As he thus moved, with burning downcast eyes, he set his foot upon one of the fragments which were fluttering about here and there. He tried to put it aside, but only ground it deeper into the soft carpet. "Bah!" said he.

But yet he turned and took another direction through the room. At that moment an insecurely fastened window was blown open by the storm, and the fragments fluttered round about him like snow-flakes.

"They want to drive me mad," he cried out loud; "but I will not go mad! Oh Lord, my God! what have I done that Thou shouldst so persecute me! What more can we unfortunate men do than act according to our knowledge and conscience! Have not I done so, so long as I can remember? If our knowledge and our wisdom are imperfect, is that our fault? Why dost Thou punish us

for that of which we are not guilty? Surely Thou art pledged to help us in time of need! If Thou hast spoken to me by the mouth of this poor blind girl, I will sacrifice my conviction, my understanding, I will be blindly obedient as a child—if Thou hast spoken to me by her!"

He pressed his hands against his throbbing temples; everything grew dim before his eyes; he staggered to the open window, offering to the storm which raged against him his burning forehead and his breast, from which he had torn open his shirt.

And through the raging storm he heard a voice crying: "Help! help!"

Did he only hear without, the echo of the cry within him?

But there—in the courtyard—was not that Grollmann rushing with uplifted hands from the open door of Justus's studio towards the house? while "Help! help!" sounded clearly in his ear!

"That poor girl! Is it Cilli?" he cried.

But Grollmann did not hear him, and ran into the house; Uncle Ernst hastened out of his room.

"Lean well upon my arm, Fräulein," said Grollmann, as he took charge of Cilli at the door. He would have given anything to

know what she had been talking about so long with his master, but she was so fearfully pale, and her breathing was so quick and hurried, that he had not the heart to ask her any questions, even if the answer could have been given in one word. As they reached the top step she was obliged to stop, however; but she pressed his hand almost imperceptibly, it was all she could do, and smiled at him.

"That is as good as an answer," thought the old man, and aloud he said:

"Now, don't you speak another word, Fräulein Cilli; but if you would like me to carry you, just nod. I am an old fellow, and you might be my granddaughter."

She smiled again, and shook her head; but he did almost carry her down the stairs and across the corner of the courtyard, into the narrow passage between the garden and the neighbouring house, till they came to the little back door leading into Herr Anders' studio.

"Here," said Cilli.

"Only a few steps more," said Grollmann.

"I have already taken leave of my father," said Cilli.

The old man did not know what she meant, and thought the poor child's mind was wandering at last; but still he had not the courage

to make any further objection as she pointed, with an imploring gesture, to the little door, as though wanting him to open it. He did so, and, extending her hand to him, she said:

"You may leave me now, and may God bless you!"

"And you, Fräulein!" said Grollmann.

But he hardly knew what he said, as, unable to tear himself from the doorway, he followed with his eyes the slender figure as, sometimes raising her arms for a moment, like a bird about to take wing, thought Grollmann, she moved amongst all the casts and models and the thousand and one things which crowded the studio, as if she really could see, thought Grollmann.

Near one of the two high windows, in the place where Herr Anders himself generally worked, stood a white marble bust upon a small pedestal. It was a portrait of Herr Anders' betrothed, and Grollmann, who had lived so long among artists that he was something of a connoisseur himself, had been delighted with the portrait, as it grew more and more like every day—really a speaking likeness, Grollmann had said.

She went up to the bust, and remained standing there, Grollmann at first thought because she could go no farther, and must

rest herself there, for she was leaning against it as if she could not stand alone. Then she raised her hands and stroked the face—her hands were as white as the marble—and nodded to it just as if she were talking to the bust, and kissed it as if it had been a living creature, and sat down upon the stool which stood near, and on which Herr Anders used to stand when he could not reach up to his figures, and leant her head upon the pedestal, and did not move again.

"Poor child," said Grollmann, "she will fall asleep there and catch her death of cold; it is quite cold now, and there will be no more fire made up till the gentlemen come back at two o'clock. I must take her upstairs."

So he came into the studio, and went up to her very gently—not that that was necessary, for he was quite determined to wake her if she had fallen asleep, but the nearer he came the more gently he moved.

And now he was standing by her.

"Poor thing," he thought to himself, "she really is asleep already, with half-shut eyes, and how sweetly she is smiling! It really would be a pity to wake her. If I had a cloak or—there is a rug lying there!"

Grollmann moved a step forward, and struck against a board, which made a sudden

noise. The old man turned round much annoyed—he had certainly awoke her. But her eyes were still half shut, and she was smiling as before.

"It is very odd," thought Grollmann, and stooped nearer to the sleeper, and then raised himself, trembling in every limb, and ran as fast as his old legs would carry him out of the studio into the house after Aunt Rikchen, whom he had just seen going in, crying in wild terror, "Fräulein Rikchen, Fräulein Rikchen! help, help!" while yet he was saying to himself that no help could avail now.

But before he could get up to the good lady and communicate his terrible news, Justus and Meta had entered the studio from the other side.

CHAPTER IV.

THEY were returning from a long expedition into the very heart of the town, where they had been wandering about since the morning, looking for a wonderfully-carved oak wardrobe which Justus had heard yesterday from his friend Bunzel, was to be found there in the possession of a broker. Meta, indeed, had humbly suggested that it might be wiser to go first to some large shop, there to choose and order their necessary furniture, and then to look for the fanciful part; but Justus had proved to her that the whole matter had begun with fancy, and that they could not be wrong in pursuing the same road a little further—firstly, because the road, on the whole, was particularly pleasant; and secondly, because the temptation of getting, probably for a mere song, a genuine Nuremberg wardrobe of the

couple," feeling quite crushed, bought the first wardrobe that came to hand for a very considerable sum, and when they found themselves in the street again, looked at each other with very long faces.

"I think, Meta," said Justus, "our driver was not far wrong. Hang that fellow Bunzel! but he shall pay me for this!"

And therewith he made so fearful and comically-furious a grimace, that Meta burst into a fit of laughter, in which Justus, after a moment's consideration, joined her.

And during their long drive back to the studio, where Justus had to make some arrangements before spending the afternoon with Meta's hostess, they were perpetually breaking into laughter again, although between whiles they were talking in all seriousness of the most weighty matters; Philip's flight which was simultaneous with the breaking up of the company, and how with all the trouble which this break up had brought to so many people, it had done this good, that it had at last obtained consent to their marriage from Meta's father, as Reinhold had foretold; and what effect the affair would have upon Reinhold and Elsa's fate; and how poor Herr Kreisel, who had put his savings into Sundin-Wissows, had been quite off his head this

morning from the shock, and trouble and anxiety for Cilli, whose future he now saw unprovided for, so that he had had to go to bed; and how foolish it was of the good old man, as he must know that his friends, and Uncle Ernst especially, would never forsake him or his dear Cilli.

On this topic they gradually became quite grave, especially Meta, who sat for some time quite still in her corner, till suddenly sitting up, she said:

"Do you know, Justus, we must take care of Cilli, for you know if she were not blind, dear thing, you would have married her, only that if she were not blind and could see what a dreadfully ugly old darling you are, she would not have been in love with you, for you know the poor thing is very much in love with you, as I am a little, you know."

Herewith she threw herself into Justus's arms, and cried as if her heart would break, and then laughed again as Justus suggested that she had better have both windows shut, so that he had much trouble in restoring her to anything like her natural self, as they crossed the court to the studio.

"For you see," said Justus, "it is all nonsense, begging your pardon, though Reinhold did suggest something of the kind. You

know better than other people that I am not over-modest, but as for Cilli, you see she is simply an angel. She has shown herself so more than ever lately, in the way she has borne with poor Ferdinanda, who really does not deserve it, as only an angel could. And it was not because she was blind that I did not fall in love with her, and would not have married her, but because I could only fall in love with and marry a human being, and you were the human being, and so——"

They had by this time entered the studio.

"Hush!" said Meta. "Don't speak so loud; it sounds as if we were in a church here, you know, like that time when Cilli—oh! the poor dear is sitting there; I think she must be asleep."

"Where?"

"There, under my bust."

But Justus needed but one glance to see with his sharp artist's eyes, that the sleep in which the pale angel form was lying, was the sleep that knows no waking.

His first idea was to spare Meta the sad sight, and he caught her hand to lead her away, but the shock which she saw expressed in his varying countenance had told her all more plainly than even the sight of the sleeping figure. She trembled all over, but she

held fast the hand which he had given to her, and they went together up to the dead girl, and looked in solemn silence into the smiling face.

"She has been praying for us," whispered Justus; "the last thought of her pure soul."

Tears choked his voice. Meta threw herself sobbing on his breast.

"Oh! Justus, Justus, how we must love each other!"

A sound close by made them look up. It was Uncle Ernst, who had hastily entered by the open studio door, and seeing the strange group had been suddenly seized by a terrible misgiving of what had happened. He had come nearer to them, and stood now close behind them with his arms folded across his chest, and his eyes fixed upon the dead face.

Grollmann and Aunt Rikchen came next, Aunt Rikchen trembling, and often sobbing aloud, but valiantly struggling with her sobs and tears as often as they threatened to dim her eyes, proving the truth of what she had always maintained of herself, that in spite of everything she was a true sister of her brother, and that when there was any need for it, she would always be found at her post.

It was she who took all necessary measures with due forethought and decision; and only

when the fair corpse had been laid upon a hastily-contrived bier to be carried into the other house, and she was about to follow, and her brother, who had let her do everything quietly, took her hand, and said with a long-drawn breath, "Thank you, Rikchen," was the warm brave heart suddenly stirred to its depths, and she would have broken into loud weeping if Uncle Ernst had not said peremptorily, but in a kindly tone such as she had never heard from his mouth, "Let that be, Rikchen! There are so many things to be done still."

"God knows there are!" thought Aunt Rikchen, but she did not say it, and followed the procession which was moving to the door.

But Uncle Ernst was standing again as before, with his arms folded across his breast, and looking fixedly at the spot where in his mind's eye he still saw the same touching picture.

"Death was in her heart!" he murmured, "and she knew it. She said it so meekly, and I did not understand it. There are no more miracles, but there are signs given to those who have eyes to see. I asked for a sign!"

His arms relaxed their pressure, and two burning tears dropped from his eyelashes and

rolled down his furrowed cheeks to his grey beard. He looked round timidly, but no one had seen him weep.

With his stately head bent low, but a step as firm as ever, he left the studio.

CHAPTER V.

AN hour later—at a few minutes before twelve—a carriage drove up to the departure-platform of the Berlin and Sundin railway station, and August jumped quickly from the box to assist the General. The General mounted the steps, while August looked round in vain for a porter.

"I told you so," called the driver, handing the small portmanteau to August. "We ought to know!"

"Perhaps it is all the better so," thought August, hastening after his master, who was standing in the empty hall at the booking-office, before the closed windows of which the green curtains had been let down.

"So the man was right after all," said the General.

"Yes, sir," said August.

A porter, who was passing by, confirmed the driver's information. The day-train went at eleven o'clock since the first of this month. The next through train was at midnight, as before. A superior official now joined them, who had served in the regiment which the General had last commanded as colonel.

"If the General were in a hurry, as he seemed to be, there was another gentleman who had come too late a few minutes ago, and who had asked for a special. There would be some difficulty about it, as all the trains had been sent off to-day with two engines, on account of the storm which was said to be raging fearfully towards Sundin. And they were obliged to keep a few engines in reserve, in case of any accident happening, particularly as the telegraphic communication with Sundin was already broken off, and they could only get news in a roundabout way. Still something might be managed perhaps. The gentleman had just gone to speak to the station-master, who was out there by the goods sheds, but he would be back again directly. Would the General be good enough to wait till then?"

With these words the man opened the door of the first-class waiting-room for the General, who followed him mechanically.

The other then said that he would himself go and see after the matter, and would bring him back word, and so left the room. August, who had followed with the portmanteau, asked if the General had any more orders.

The General told him to wait; he did not know yet what he should do, and August went away greatly disturbed in mind; it was the first time since he had been in the General's service that he did not know what he was going to do.

The unhappy man was in fact in a state of mind bordering on madness. After the terrible reckoning with his son, all his remaining strength had been concentrated upon one idea—revenge, immediate, implacable revenge upon the wily villain, the hypocritical scoundrel who—he felt sure of it at heart, although his disturbed reason could not penetrate the details of the plot—had now robbed him of his son, as formerly of his sister, and heaped shame and disgrace upon the proud name of Werben. At the moment when, with this one thought in his mind, he entered the carriage which was to take him to the railway, two letters arrived, one by the post in Elsa's handwriting, and a note brought by Schönau's servant. He had opened Elsa's letter at once, and hastily glanced at the few lines,

but without really understanding the contents. How could he? How could he have sense, feeling, or understanding for anything in the world, before he knew what Schönau's note contained? But he knew it already! It could be but one thing! Schönau had not ventured to come himself to say, "He is dead!"

He sat thus a long time, with the fatal note in his trembling hand, and at last, when they were close to the station, by a mechanical impulse he tore it open and read it, only to crush the paper in his hand afterwards, and thrust it into his pocket, while he leaned back in a corner of the carriage with a ghastly smile upon his pale worn face.

He was walking up and down now in the great empty room, from the looking-glass between the glass doors which led on to the platform, to the door into the entrance hall, and then back again, stopping only sometimes at the centre table in front of the little box which stood there, once even stretching out his hand to it, and then with a shake of the head pursuing his walk.

Was there any sense in it now? Might he not just as well have left at home his pistol, the caps for which were in his pocket? Or better still have remained at home himself,

let things take their course, and people have their own way? At any rate confess to himself his helplessness in regard to things or men, and that he was a broken-down old man, good for nothing but to look on idly at the battle of life as others fought it out, however melancholy, perverse, and miserable the spectacle might be!

Melancholy for him whose heart was crushed and broken, even where formerly he would have looked with satisfaction—his Elsa's happiness. It was not indeed the happiness of which he had dreamed for her, but to that he was resigned; it was not a brilliant lot which she had chosen for herself, but she loved the man, and, other considerations apart, he was worthy of her love. And it could not be helped either when a stranger knew her secret, that the whole world should know it at the same moment that it was confided to her father.

And yet! and yet! Why should it have happened just now, just to-day? She was not to blame, neither was he whom she would own as hers before all the world; but upon her name and his their nearest relations had heaped such shameful guilt, had so dragged both the humble and the noble name through the mire, that every beggar might

tread upon them with impunity. Death would have atoned for so much, perhaps almost for all! The worst part of the disgrace would have been hidden in the darkness of the grave, and that which had been left behind on earth—the whispers of malicious tongues —would soon have been silenced! Had he required too much? Was death more bitter than the agony of mind which he had endured in these last terrible hours? And if it were, Ottomar must surely know how to die; he could not add to the disgrace of his forgeries, the thousand times greater disgrace of a cowardly flight. And could Schönau have given his consent to this shameful course? He had not done so with goodwill evidently; he hinted even at accompanying circumstances, which he could have wished omitted, but which appeared to have been unavoidable, though he could not take upon himself the responsibility of them. Could this man think and write so, whom he had often, and not merely in jest, called a knight *sans peur et sans reproche?* Had he so entirely misconceived his and the Colonel's opinion? Did he remain the sole survivor of an earlier and better time, incomprehensible to the present generation as they were incomprehensible to him? What difference remained then be-

tween a nobleman and officer and an adventurer who runs away from his creditors, a clerk who flies with his master's strong box—what difference between Ottomar von Werben and Philip Schmidt? There was none; the bankrupt tradesman and the aristocratic forger stood on the same level, only that the former might say, "I at least had not the face to compromise an honest man's daughter, to morally compel my father to go to the girl's father, and put himself in the humiliating position of being refused—rightly and wisely, as the result shows!"

To the General's over-excited imagination the scene of that morning suddenly presented itself as if it had only happened an hour before. The day had been gloomy, like this day; the autumn wind had howled round the walls as the March wind was doing to-day, and the rain had pattered against the window just as it did now. It had been a terrible hour, when he had been forced to humble himself so deeply before the proud plebeian, even though the man himself bore the stamp of nobility—which nature can give and which life often confirms—upon his broad forehead, and on every feature of his fine and venerable countenance. If he should ever again meet this man, should have to endure the look of

those deep, shining eyes, where, where could he turn his own ?

The General, who had been standing, hardly knowing where he was, with his fixed eyes to the floor, looked up as one of the glass doors on to the platform opened with some noise, and the man whom he had just been seeing in his mind's eye entered, and closing the door came towards him.

He passed his hand across his forehead. Had his senses really forsaken him ? Was that the reason why this vision so little resembled the reality ?—why the fire in the deep eyes was extinguished ?—why the head, which had been held so high, was now bent low ?—why the voice which now addressed him was not harsh with anger and hate, as it had been that morning, but a deep, gentle voice, gentle as the words he now began to understand, and which roused him to a sense of reality ?

" I have just heard, General von Werben, that you also wish to go to Sundin ; I must suppose, for the same business that takes me there. I have been promised a special train in half an hour. Will you do me the honour of making use of it also ?"

The General's stern, self-controlled countenance looked so distracted and wild with

grief, the clear, commanding eyes looked so bewildered, so helpless, that Uncle Ernst could not but feel, as the other had done before, that he was now the stronger and more collected. With a courteous movement he pushed forward a chair to the General, who was leaning unsteadily against the table, and when he mechanically followed the suggestion, seated himself opposite to him.

"I take it for granted, General, that you have received Herr von Schönau's letter, and that your presence here is the result of that letter?"

The General appeared not to have understood him, and, indeed, he had only heard the words. What did Herr Schmidt know of Schönau's letter? He uttered the question as it crossed his mind. It was now Uncle Ernst's turn to look up in surprise.

"Have you not received a letter from Herr von Schönau?"

"Yes."

"Mentioning that your son—has gone away?"

The General nodded.

"An hour ago—from this station—to Sundin?"

"To Sundin?" repeated the General. Strange that he had not guessed that at

once! If Ottomar intended to live, his first thought must naturally be revenge upon that scoundrel—or was it rather the last thing that he wished to accomplish before his death? He might have left it to his father; but, still, here was a gleam of light in the terrible darkness—a spark from the heart of the son, who was not, after all, so entirely lost, into that of the father. "It was not mentioned in the note," said he. He had raised his head a little, and a feeble fire shone in his sad eyes; there was some look in him again of the iron soldier with whom Uncle Ernst had had that terrible passage-of-arms the other day.

"Not mentioned?" said Uncle Ernst; "but, good heavens——"

He broke off suddenly; his face darkened, and his voice sounded harsher, almost as it had done that morning, as he continued:

"Then in his brief note, Captain von Schönau probably did not mention the circumstance that Herr von Werben undertook the journey in question with my daughter?"

The General drew himself up at these words, like a man who was about sharply to resent an unexpected insult. The looks of the two men met; but while Uncle Ernst's eyes blazed more fiercely, the General's sought

the ground, as, with a faint groan, he sank back in his chair.

"Miserable man!" he muttered to himself.

"You have to thank this circumstance—I mean the intervention of my daughter—that he is still alive," said Uncle Ernst.

"I can feel no gratitude for that," replied the General in a hollow voice.

"And that the father has not the son's death upon his head."

"The father would have been able to endure that responsibility."

"So I should suppose," muttered Uncle Ernst.

He sat for a few moments silent, and his looks also were now gloomy and downcast; but this was neither the time nor the place to renew the ancient feud. In a composed tone he said:

"If General von Werben did not know where Herr von Werben was gone, and that he was with my daughter, may I ask what brought him here?"

"I had intended to call to account the man whom I must suppose has brought ruin upon my son, as he has already brought ruin and shame upon my family. I confess that I hardly see any sense in this project now, and that I——"

The General made a movement as if to rise.

"Do not go, General," said Uncle Ernst. "If time had permitted, I would have gone to you and asked the favour of an interview; now that chance—if we may call it chance—has brought us together, let us make use of this half-hour; it may spare us perhaps years of vain remorse."

The General shot from under his bushy brows a dark, uncertain glance at the speaker.

"Yes, General," said Uncle Ernst, "I repeat it—remorse; though we have neither of us had much opportunity yet of making acquaintance with such a thing. I think we may both bear witness of ourselves, without boasting, that we have all our lives long desired to do right, according to the best of our knowledge and conscience; but, General, since that first and only interview which I had with you, the words have been constantly ringing in my ear, and I hear them at this moment more plainly than ever, that I have indeed forgotten nothing, but have also learned nothing. It was a hard saying to a man like myself, whose highest pride had been to have striven from his youth up after a better and purer experience, after truth and light; and I put it from me, therefore, as an absolute injustice. But it has returned upon me again

and again, all through these dark and gloomy winter months, day after day, and night after night, and it has gnawed at my heart till I almost went mad over it, for I thought I could not believe those words without giving up myself, without denying the sun at mid-day, or at least admitting that that sun had dark, very dark spots, fearfully dark for one who would joyfully have laid his head upon the block for its spotless purity. And yet, General, it was so. However the tortured heart might cry out against it, the relentless words would not be silenced: 'You, who glory in having forgotten nothing, have lost the better part, and you have learned nothing.'

"This hard battle, General, in which I have nearly perished, and which has certainly shortened my life by many years, has continued till this very day, till this very hour. Even the shameless and disgraceful act of my son, with whom for years past I have lived in unnatural enmity, could not break my pride. 'What is it to me,' I cried, 'if he drew poison from the honey, if, when I had made respect for foolish prejudices ridiculous to the boy, he later on lost all reverence for the sacredness of law? If my teaching that it was every man's duty to stand upon his own feet and

trust in his own strength was perverted by him into the doctrine that he who had the might had the right also to take all that his hand could grasp, and to tread under foot whatever was weak enough to allow itself to be trampled upon? He has been corrupt from his childhood,' I cried, 'let Nature be answerable for all that she has created in her dark recesses! What matters it to us who, out of the chaos where right and wrong, reason and folly, are wavering and mingling confusedly together, are striving after the light of absolute self-dependence? What matters it above all to the plebeian, to whom the aristocrat's pride in his forefathers seems ridiculous? Let the children go their way! Why should the question of whither we go seem to us more worthy of inquiry than of whence we come, concerning which on principle we ask nothing? Pale spectre of family honour, write thy Mene Tekel on the walls of the prince's palace, on the walls of the noble's house, but attempt not to awe the free man who has no honour and desires no honour, but that of remaining true to himself!'

"And then, General, as I thus strove with my God—I believe in a God, General von Werben, Radical and Republican as I am—there crossed my threshold an angel, if I may

so call a being whose heavenly goodness and purity seem to have no trace of earth, my clerk's daughter, a blind girl, whom you have perhaps heard mentioned in your family circle. She came to tell me that my daughter had fled—fled with your son, to save him whom she loved with every fibre of her warm, passionate heart, to shield him from the death to which his own father, for what reason I knew not, had condemned him. But I had thrust the spectre from my door, I would not listen now to the angel's soft voice, although a strange awe, which I could not account for, thrilled through me. The meaning was not long unexplained. The pure, pitiful words had been the last which that noble being had drawn from the strength only of her immeasurable love; a few minutes later the purest heart which ever throbbed in human breast had ceased to beat."

Uncle Ernst pressed his hand to his eyes, and, suppressing his deep emotion by a powerful effort, continued:

"I cannot require of you, General, that you should share my feelings, and I will not waste the precious minutes in a detailed account of the steps which I have now taken, moved by a force which I have neither the power nor the wish further to withstand, in

order to save what is perhaps not yet utterly lost. Suffice it to you to know that I have ascertained from the woman who has been your son's confidante lately, and also, without knowing it, the tool of that dangerous man who is such an arch-enemy of your family—I have ascertained, I believe, nearly all that I need know of the sad history which has been played beneath our eyes, unobserved by us.

"Suffice it to you that I am convinced, not of your son's innocence, it would be a lie were I to say that, and to-day more than ever we must have the courage to be sternly true to ourselves and to each other, but that he is not more guilty than a combination of unhappy circumstances may make a young man who, in spite of all his apparent knowledge of the world, is absolutely inexperienced, and whose heart, though no longer sinless, is not corrupt, but capable of noble impulses. And, General, if I have made to you, in whom I have always seen the impersonation of the principles most detested and abhorred by me, to you, above whom in my own self-righteousness I stood so high, a confession which has not been easy to my pride; if I have acknowledged that the principle of unbounded liberty and absolute self-dependence when carried to its extreme consequence may lead weaker

spirits into error, must so lead them perhaps, as I see my two children erring now, one irrecoverably lost, the other only trembling on the edge of the abyss, into which some mere accident may precipitate her; have you, too, General von Werben, nothing to repent of, nothing to atone for? Have not the narrow fetters of aristocratic and military routine, in which you have tried to confine your son's easily-led disposition, been equally fatal to him? To him who in a freer and lighter atmosphere might have happily and naturally unfolded the bright gifts of his clear understanding, the powers of enjoyment of his warm heart, and who now, compressed and confined by prejudices on all sides, entangled in hopeless contradictions, has gradually accustomed himself to look upon life so completely and entirely as a series of necessary and unavoidable contradictions, that his death at this moment would be only one more?

"A terrible and monstrous contradiction. For would it not be one? Death by his own hand, at the moment when that hand is seized by the woman whom this self-condemned suicide—from all that I now hear I am certain of this—loves with all the force of which his heart is capable, and certainly far more than his own life; and this woman,

who is not unworthy indeed of such love, says to him in tones which can only come from a loving and despairing heart: 'Live, live! Live for me, to whom you are all! I have left father, and house, and home, to live for you! With you, without hoping for better days! With you, in shame and misery, if need be—with you!'"

Uncle Ernst ceased, overpowered by the feelings of his noble, strong heart, choked by the thoughts which surged in his powerfully working mind. The General, who had been sitting in gloomy meditation, raised his sorrow-dimmed eyes.

"If need be?—it must be!"

"Must be?" cried Uncle Ernst; "why? Because to the poor weary wayworn wanderers it seems that the farther road for them can only be toiling through the desert, through thorns and over stony ground? For them! Good heavens! They who are young and strong, who will soon in the palmy Eden of their love recognise their youth and strength, and with renewed courage and refreshed hearts go out into life, which stretches boundless and beautiful before them! Life, in whose immeasurable space there is a thousand-fold room for the man who has erred, if he has but courage and can rise firmly to

his feet again to resume the battle, and to conquer in a new sphere of work, a home for himself, for the woman he loves—for his children! The children, General, with whom a new world is born which knows nothing of the old, which needs to know and should know nothing of the father's sin; that sin which, if the father indeed has not atoned for by his sorrow, by his penance, by a single noble deed, they may redeem by the simple fact of living, of being new blossoms on the tree of humanity, at the foot of which we old people with our ancient griefs and troubles shall long have gone to rest."

Uncle Ernst's great eyes were glowing with noble enthusiasm; but the General's troubled face gave not the faintest response to it. He slowly shook his grey head.

"I must ask you one question, which sounds very cruel, but is not meant to be so, only to bring us down from this region of bright and, to my thinking, fantastic dreams to this dark earth. Does the perspective which you open to my son, extend also to your son?"

Uncle Ernst started, the fire of his glance was dimmed, and some moments elapsed before his answer came.

"The cases are as far apart as heaven is

from earth, as far as a thoughtless act intended to injure no one, which he who committed it hoped, I know, to make good, and to which he had been after all led away by fiendish suggestions, differs from a proceeding which was carried out with the most cold-blooded calculation, in the full knowledge of the ruinous consequences to thousands of others."

"And for which meanwhile there can be no atonement in your eyes?"

Uncle Ernst moved restlessly, impatiently in his chair.

"What do you mean, General?"

"Only to remind you, that turn ourselves which way we will, we must always judge life from our own point of view, and we can only measure men's actions by the rule which birth, education, intellect and reflection have given to us. Or do you think that the stock-jobber, the speculator, the reckless adventurer, would in their hearts, if such men have hearts, condemn your son as the man of honour, the honest manufacturer does, although he is his father? And can you blame an honourable soldier because he condemns and brands the dishonourable conduct of another soldier, although that soldier is his son, or rather because he is his son? Can

you suppose that I would deny my son, whom I have loved as well as any father ever loved his son, whom even at this moment I love with a love that rends my heart——"

The General's voice shook, and he drew a long breath, almost a groan, that echoed shudderingly in the silent room.

"Can you suppose that I would deny him the life which you describe, if I did not believe it to be impossible? It may be that the narrow bonds, of which you spoke just now, have so cramped my mental horizon that they have for ever checked the free flight of thought. But these conditions of thought and feeling exist for the whole class, and must so exist if it is not to be swept away; and so they exist also for my son. Never, under any circumstances can he forget that he has cast a stain upon the shield of his forefathers, that he has himself broken the sword which he received from his commander-in-chief, that he has disgraced his arms, that he could not look one of his old comrades in the face even if they met in a desert, that he must carefully seek the society of obscure men whom he would formerly as carefully have avoided, he who once might stand freely and boldly before his king, whom his king——"

And again the General drew a long, deep breath.

Uncle Ernst's lips were twitching. Here again there rose before him the barrier which pride and arrogance had drawn straight across life's bloom; the barrier which in his stormy youthful days he had thought to conquer by one effort, and which he had afterwards tried through long weary years to carry off stone by stone! And not one stone was missing after all; it stood straight and strong, unapproachable and invincible as ever! And he stood powerless on this side, and on the other side was his child who must be lost now because pride and arrogance would have it so. No, it should never be!

He sprang up.

"Then I must set to work alone."

"What was your plan?"

The General had risen also, but the mere movement seemed difficult to the man who used to be so alert and active.

"Roughly this," answered Uncle Ernst; "not to allow my child to go out unreconciled to me into a life whose varied changes no man can reckon upon, and whose otherwise too hard path I desired as far as possible to smooth by my advice and help. I gathered from the woman of whom I spoke that in

the first hurried agitation of his distracted thoughts, even before his father's message arrived, your son had intended to hasten to Warnow, to force an explanation from the traitor in the presence of his aunt the Baroness, who according to this scoundrel's declaration had taken upon herself the material responsibility, so to speak, of these unhappy bills, at least had promised under all circumstances to make good the deficiency. Herr von Schönau even, after many objections, had agreed to this. When, therefore, the unhappy man wished to kill himself, in spite of the presence of his friend, who felt his own powerlessness and yet could advise my daughter to return home, as flight with her at this moment would make it absolutely impossible for him to intervene further on behalf of his brother-officer, when it became the first consideration for her who wished to save her lover at any cost, even that of the pitying contempt of his best friend, to escape from the influence of this very cautious friendship, no matter whither; then the adroit confidante brought forward again the idea of Warnow, merely, I believe, because the train for Sundin was the first to start. I, for my part, hoped and still hope to overtake them in Sundin, to be able to tell your son that

there is no object in the continuation of his journey, as I claim for myself the right of paying the debts of the man who has eloped with my daughter, and who will therefore also marry her. Should they have gone on to Warnow I shall of course follow them there, or anywhere else until I overtake them. At Warnow too I promise myself the assistance of my nephew. He possesses and deserves my daughter's highest respect, and I am convinced that he would add to the father's blessing the good wishes of a friend who, in turning the pages of the book of honour, does not omit the chapters which treat of humanity."

The patience of the passionate spirit was exhausted; in the last words might be traced even suppressed wrath. He buttoned his overcoat and took up his hat, which stood on the table by the General's little box, as the man who had before offered his services to the General entered the room from the platform with the stationmaster. The stationmaster went up to Uncle Ernst to inform him that the train was ready, while the other handed a telegram to the General.

"I happened to be in the office," said he, "when it arrived, through Stettin, having

been handed in early this morning at Prora. I think the contents are of importance."

The General took the paper, which in the hurry had not even been folded:

"Come by the next train. Frightful storm. Must perhaps go to Reinhold. Aunt alone then with that wretch. Come for my sake, Ottomar's, and aunt's, who throws herself upon your mercy. Everything is at stake.—ELSA."

Uncle Ernst came forward.

"I must wish you good-bye, General."

"I will come with you."

Uncle Ernst looked in astonishment at the General, who folded the telegram, while August, who with old Grollmann, whom he had met outside, had been looking after the two gentlemen's things, and had now returned, seized the little box to carry it after his master to the carriage in which he had taken his seat with Uncle Ernst. The two servants were in the next carriage, which with the engine made up the whole train.

"They seem to be of one mind so far," said Grollmann.

"Whatever is wanting still will be made up before we get to Sundin," said August.

"If only the storm does not blow us off the rails first," said Grollmann.

"It really is A 1," said August.

CHAPTER VI.

NOBODY had had any sleep at Castle Warnow excepting Frau von Wallbach. And even she had been repeatedly awakened or nearly so by strange noises of rolling and rattling, just as if she were at home in the Behrenstrasse and a dozen big parties were breaking up at the same moment, and an alarm of fire sounding between whiles. What could it have been? The maid who brought her chocolate to her bedside told her that it was the storm, which had been raging fearfully since her lady went to bed last night.

"How odd!" said Frau von Wallbach. "But why have you come in so early? I do not want to start before eleven."

"It is ten o'clock now, ma'am; it will be no lighter to-day."

"Of course not, if you do not open the shutters."

"They have not been shut, ma'am; we did not dare to do it even last night. One shutter has already been torn off by the wind, as I saw from the ground-floor window."

"How odd!" said Frau von Wallbach. "You have packed my things, I suppose?"

"Oh, certainly, ma'am; but we shall not be able to travel to-day. Herr Damberg has sent over to say that he is very sorry, but it can't be done; there is no knowing what may happen, and he must keep all his horses at the farm."

"Why, what could happen?"

"I don't know, ma'am, but they do say that it may be something very bad. If you would only get up, ma'am, and see for yourself. One would think the world was coming to an end. Every one is running about with pale faces, and I am dreadfully frightened, ma'am."

"It is very foolish of you. Is Fräulein von Wallbach up yet?"

"Yes, ma'am, she has already inquired after you twice."

"You may tell her that I can see her now. And then take my compliments to the Baroness, and ask her if she will be so kind as to lend me her horses to drive to Prora;

I will come and see her myself as soon as I am dressed."

Carla came in just as Louisa was slipping on her dressing-gown. She was already dressed for the day, and Frau von Wallbach thought her looking very pale, with deep circles under her eyes. Carla assured her that this was only the dreadful light, and besides, she had not slept quite so well as usual; but this was certainly less the result of the storm than of the communication that the Count had made to her when he rode by yesterday evening; he had only remained five minutes, just long enough to tell her this delightful story in a few hasty words.

"What story?" asked Louisa, sipping her chocolate.

"The same story," said Carla, "which my sweet pet would not believe yesterday, but which she cannot help believing, now that the last interesting chapter has been partly played out in presence of Count Golm."

And Carla gave her, with all the additions and embellishments she considered necessary for her purpose, an account of the events at Wissow Head yesterday evening.

Frau von Wallbach meanwhile finished her second cup, which she usually took on the sofa, and leaned back.

"Well, what do you say?" asked Carla.

"What should I say," answered Frau von Wallbach, "since you prepared me for it yesterday? And I do not see either why you should pretend to be so very much astonished to-day. What does it signify after all to you or Golm? I should have thought you had both very good reason to be satisfied that things have turned out so. He could only marry one after all. It seems now that you will be the one."

"But what will Edward say?" cried Carla.

"I do not see what objection my husband can have. It seems to me rather, the more I think of it, that he only sent us here to settle it between you. Only I think it would have been more civil of him—and of you too, by the way—if you had told me so beforehand instead of leaving me in the dark; and I shall tell Edward so when we get home to-day."

Carla had sat down on the sofa by her sister-in-law, and was playing with one of the long ribbons of her dressing-gown.

"We, sweet pet?" said she. "I thought you meant to go home alone, pet?"

"And I think you are too foolish," answered Frau von Wallbach, "and I should be ashamed of myself in your place, only I

suppose you are too much in love to know what you are talking about. How can you, now that you have come to an understanding with Golm, as you seem to have done—"

"But there is nothing decided between us!" cried Carla.

"It is all the same, besides—begging your pardon—I don't believe it. But no matter, you cannot remain another day as a guest in the house of Ottomar's aunt; it would be perfectly scandalous, and I will have nothing to do with it, and if you do not come with me—what's that?"

The remaining shutter closed noisily, and a pane of glass fell with a clatter into the room.

Carla jumped up with a scream of terror.

"Do you want us to travel in this weather?"

"If I can, so can you," said Frau von Wallbach; "and now have the goodness to get ready; we shall start in an hour at latest."

Fortunately for Carla, who did not know how to avert the threatened blow, the maid came back at this moment to say that the Baroness was very sorry that she could not oblige Frau von Wallbach; she was herself obliged to go out with Fräulein von Werben. But she had sent to inquire in the village;

perhaps one of the peasants might provide horses, but it was not very likely.

"This is pleasant," said Frau von Wallbach, "I cannot go away on foot. Where are the ladies going?"

The maid smiled. She could not say for certain, but Fräulein von Werben's maid thought they might be going to Wissow.

"Very well," said Frau von Wallbach; "just see that that window is put right. I will go myself to the Baroness, she will excuse my déshabillé. Come with me, Carla!"

Carla would much rather not have gone, but Louisa was so intolerably determined to-day, that she must do all she could to coax her back into good humour. Besides, if, as now appeared probable, Louisa did not go away, she had at least the pleasant prospect of seeing the two other ladies out of the house, perhaps for the whole day. She could soon talk over Louisa into not putting any insurmountable obstacle in the way of the daring, delightful scheme which she had hastily concocted with the Count yesterday. And as to the important question of her own stay, there could hardly remain a doubt.

"But, my sweet pet," said she to her sister-in-law, as they passed along the corridor to the Baroness's room, "you would not do

such a thing by me as to make any allusion to Count Golm in my presence? So long as they keep silence towards us, we really need not be the first to speak."

"I thought nothing had been decided between you," said Frau von Wallbach.

"All the more then," said Carla.

Valerie was alone when the two ladies came in, and already dressed for her drive. She, too, looked pale and tired, so much so that the good-natured Louisa exclaimed:

"You should go to bed again, my dear Baroness, instead of braving this storm, which really seems to be frightful. I will go with Elsa, that sort of thing does not hurt me; or, what would be the wisest thing, we will all stay here and keep you company, even if my company is not too amusing."

"Certainly," interposed Carla, "we will willingly remain with you, and pass this dull day sociably together."

Valerie, without seeming to see Carla, took Louisa's hand.

"Thank you for your kindness, dear Frau von Wallbach, but forgive me if notwithstanding I seem to slight the duties of hospitality. It can only be for a few hours, as I expect another visitor to-day, Signor Giraldi, with whom I have to speak of some most

important business. He will be surprised and disappointed, therefore, at not finding me, and so I wanted to ask you to tell him that I have gone to Wissow with my niece, whose betrothed—of course you have heard of it all from Fräulein von Wallbach—is exposed to great danger in this fearful storm. We have waited until now for news, but in vain, as was natural under the circumstances; and have no hope of receiving any now, while we fear the worst, at least I do; for my dear niece is still trying to inspire me with courage, though hers must be inwardly failing her. Your kind heart can feel for me—for us, I am sure."

"Of course, of course!" said Frau von Wallbach, in whose good-natured eyes tears were standing; "go, my dear Baroness, and think no more of us; and as for your commission—when do you expect Signor Giraldi?"

"He ought to have been here the first thing this morning, but no doubt the violence of the storm has detained him; he may arrive at any moment."

"It is all the same to me," said Frau von Wallbach; "I will do the honours to him. The chief thing is that you should set off; and here comes dear Elsa."

She met Elsa, who now came in ready for

her drive, with a warmth to which Elsa gratefully responded. It was a comfort to feel that all good hearts would be on the same side in this conflict which was threatening all around, and in which so many of the worst passions were let loose, so many sordid motives were mingling. And she could not help admiring the honesty with which this woman, whose insignificance had become a byword, declared herself on the side which she considered right in the decisive moment, even in Carla's presence, following the impulse of her own heart with no thought for anything further. What Carla might think of it, as she stood apart, trying to retain her usual company smile of civility, but not venturing, in spite of her boasted self-possession and presence of mind, to join in this painful scene by so much as a word, Elsa did not desire to know; she was glad when she was in the carriage with her aunt, and they had started.

It was unfortunately impossible to-day to choose the shorter road to Wissow. The fields and meadows along the shore, through which Elsa had passed the evening before, were too wet, the coachman said, in consequence of the torrents of rain which had been falling since last night. They saw traces of

this as soon as they had left the comparatively higher ground on which the castle with the park and home farm were situated, and had reached the hollow which extended along the side of the chain of hills on which the village stood, and which joined at either end the plain. The wheels sank at once almost to the axles, although the road was well gravelled and was in general quite dry; and they had some trouble in getting through it though it extended for barely two hundred yards.

It was dreadful, said Herr Damberg, the farmer, who met them on their way to the village, and rode a little way back by the sides of the carriage; and one couldn't tell yet whether it might not get much worse, and if it would not be better to follow Captain Schmidt's advice, who had sent word all round the coast yesterday that there would be a frightfully high tide if the storm came up from the east, which might reach far inland, and measures should be taken to prepare for it. Well, the castle and the home farm lay high enough, unless things got worse than bad; but the hollow here, whose bottom was on the same level as, or even lower than the marshes, would at any rate be flooded, and then at Warnow they would be on an

island. And a pleasant situation that would be, particularly as inland here they had got no boats, and nobody could tell how long this state of things might last. He was only glad that he had not signed the new agreement with the Count. The wheatfields and meadows there were all very well, but they could not yield enough to carry one through a calamity such as threatened now, and the consequences of which were not to be foretold, especially when rents were twice as high as they used to be.

"Ah! yes, my lady," said Herr Damberg, "your good husband was a just man. He thought of other people, and not of himself alone, like some other gentlemen. Well, my lady, I must go back now, and look after things at home, before they all lose their heads there. I hope your ladyship and the young lady will get safe to Wissow and back again, and tell the Captain that he had better keep some boats ready for us, as he may have work to do here before night."

The old man said this quite seriously, and then pulled his cap, which he had taken off, well down upon his forehead, set spurs to his horse, and rode down to the farm just as the carriage reached the first house in the village.

Here, too, the excitement, which to-day had roused the most sluggish, had taken hold of the people. Although they were themselves safe from the flood in case it came, with the exception of a few cottages at the foot of the hill, their comparatively lofty position had exposed them all the more to the ravages of the storm. Both thatched and tiled roofs had been partly or entirely destroyed, windows blown in, chimneys knocked down, hedges overthrown, branches had been broken off in quantities, and even the trees themselves blown down. On the little green before the inn-door, about the highest spot in the place, lay the great lime-tree, the pride of the village, torn up by the roots. It had only happened half an hour before, and it was fortunate that the three waggons which had come down from Jasmund, on their way to Prora, had not already stood where they were waiting now, at the inn-door, for if so horses and men must all have been killed. The men would not go any farther, said the landlord, who had come to the carriage-door; they were afraid that the waggon might be blown off the road in the storm. And indeed the Baroness had much better turn back too; for though the road to Wissow ran behind the hill for a part of the way, and so was to

some extent protected, it might be very bad when they got round the point and down upon Wissow itself, where they would be fully exposed to the storm again.

"Oh, go on, go on!" cried Elsa.

She had indeed summoned up all her strength, so that no one who did not feel for her like Valerie could have guessed what was passing in her mind. But now, when the fury of the elements, from which she had been sheltered in the castle, broke upon her from all sides, and appeared to her by a thousand terrible signs; when she saw written upon so many faces, the terror which she, for her aunt's sake, had been hiding in her trembling heart, even her courage wavered, and she laid her head weeping upon her faithful friend's shoulder.

"Cry as much as you will, dear child," said Valerie kindly; "it will relieve your poor anxious heart. They are pure and gentle tears, and truly you need not be ashamed of them. You have struggled as not many could have done."

"But I had promised myself and him to be brave," sobbed Elsa; "and I always think he will find out if I am not, and then he will not be so strong himself as is required of him by his duty and by his own brave heart."

A wonderful smile flitted across Valerie's pale face.

"If all could rest as securely in their love and in their faith in those they love as you can do! Oh, Elsa, Elsa, how unspeakably happy you are in your sorrow!"

"I know it," said Elsa, "and am doubly ashamed of myself for burdening your poor heart with fresh cares for me."

"And for whom else should I care?" answered Valerie. "Certainly not for myself. I have told you all without losing your love; I want to carry your love with me to the grave, and so end my life joyfully, as a wild, fever-haunted night ends with a gentle morning dream. It might all be over then; for the day so passionately hoped for through the long, terrible years—the day when your father would say to me, 'Valerie, I have forgiven you,' will never come now."

"What if it were to-day?" said Elsa, taking her aunt's hand in hers. Forgive me for what I have done without consulting you! As I sat by you last night, and the storm raged more and more furiously, I felt that I had over-calculated my strength, that I should have to leave you to-day to hasten to Reinhold, and that I ought not to leave you without sending for my father. I telegraphed to

him early this morning; he will come, I am sure. But he cannot be here before the evening, and that is why, my dear aunt, I have let you accompany me. Everything fits in so well with this arrangement: that dreadful man has not come as we expected, and when we go home this evening, even if you go home alone, you will not have to meet him by yourself; you will have one by you who can and will protect you better than I could do. You are not angry with me, aunt?"

Valerie smiled through the tears which ran down her pale cheeks.

"I cannot be angry with my good angel! May you have been my good angel in this case also!—but I dare not hope it! Your father knows and respects justice alone; the gracious, redeeming power of mercy he does not know. I cannot but suppose that he despises it, and despises those who plead for mercy. My imploring letters, which I was forced amidst a thousand terrors to hide from spying eyes, as I hid the answers also, have never moved him. Cold and repelling was the look with which he met me after so long a lapse of time, which generally softens the sternest; cold and repelling the few words which he deigned to address to me, merely to tell me what was the first step I must take if

there were to be peace between him and me. He did not see what you, my darling, perceived at the first glance, that I could not take this step as matters now stood—that without the help of some compassionate heart I never could take it. Oh, Elsa, Elsa! I will not blame your father, especially before you; but, Elsa, many things would have happened differently and more happily for me—for us all—for your father himself—if he had ever really understood that profound saying, that the proud will not enter the kingdom of heaven."

"But my father has been so kind to me," said Elsa, "although my attachment has so completely destroyed all his hopes for my future. And it was he, too, who made the first advance to Reinhold's proud uncle, so that it was not his fault certainly that Ottomar's affairs turned out so badly."

Valerie did not answer. She did not wish to tell her dear niece how very differently the matter appeared to her; how she believed, on the contrary, that it was just his father's intervention that had made Ottomar's union with Ferdinanda impossible; and that even his consent in Elsa's case was not the hearty approval of a loving father, but that of a man who unwillingly allows what he cannot pre-

vent, without violating his highest principles of justice.

Elsa was silent also; her thoughts had flown forward in advance of the carriage, which seemed hardly to make any progress, in spite of all the efforts of their bold driver and powerful horses. They would have been even slower in their movements over the ill-made road, which in some places was almost destroyed by the rain, if the hill, along the side of which they were driving, had not broken the force of the gale. Two or three times only, on rising ground, they met its full power, and then it seemed almost a miracle that the whole equipage was not blown over.

Still it held firm, and so did the horses, who repeatedly had to stand still and stem the blast with the whole weight of their bodies. At such moments when they could see over the plain to the left, right down to the sea, the two ladies saw with terror, above the long waving line of the grey dunes from Golmberg to the point, another white line rising and falling, and here and there shooting up thirty or forty feet into the air, and falling upon the land in dense clouds. They knew that this was surf, the surf of that same sea whose waves generally rippled and splashed

on the smooth sand, fifty or a hundred yards away from the foot of the dunes, as they had done on that rainy evening when Elsa stood there wrapped in her cloak, and the waving grasses on the edge of the dunes behind her seemed to entice her on farther to more delightful adventures.

Ah! her mind was no longer full of adventures! Whither had fled that bold and daring spirit which had thought it might defy fate? Whither the sunny cheerfulness which had then so filled her whole soul that that dark and rainy evening had seemed to her brighter than the brightest day? Whither, ah! whither, the joyous heart that knew nothing of love, nor wished to know anything excepting as the rose-scented, nightingale-haunted idea reflected back from the enchanted mirror of fancy and dreamland? Now the reality had come, in grim mockery of the bright fable of old! And yet—and yet! poor tormented heart, you would not resign it for Paradise, if you could not meet him there!

"And if I did not meet him again!"

She had exclaimed it aloud, horrified at the sight which presented itself to her, when having surmounted the line of hills which now descended from Wissow Head to the sea,

Wissow itself lay below them. The little peninsula, which might be at the outside a mile long and about half as wide at the foot of the headland, looked with its small houses, as seen from the moderate elevation at which they were, like a narrow plank on which children had built their toy-houses, and had then set afloat in a brawling stream. The surf, which till now they had seen only from a distance, and always partly concealed by the dunes, here rose between the open sea and the little strip of sand like a great wall, whose upper edge, torn into zigzag lines, rose and fell, and rose again, and was driven in foam and froth over the grey sand and amongst the little houses.

And yet, strange as it seemed, these little houses on the grey sand could still afford safe shelter! But how could she hope that he would meet her on the threshold of one of them? That his boat would be one of the twenty or thirty vessels of all sizes which were rocking at anchor immediately below them, in the bay between the little peninsula and the mainland? He would be out beyond, beyond where, as far as the eye could reach, foaming waves towered above each other; beyond where sea and sky mingled in one terrible darkness, as if they

had met together for the destruction of the world.

"There! There!"

But the words died on Elsa's trembling lips; the hand with which she had pointed seawards fell heavily beside her.

Valerie took the cold, rigid fingers:

"He will return, Elsa!"

But Elsa shook her head.

CHAPTER VII.

IT was about four o'clock in the afternoon. Frau von Wallbach sat in the drawing-room, in her usual place by the fire, and stared at the flames, which, after many vain efforts, had at last been successfully kindled; and, notwithstanding the terrible uproar that raged round the castle, was on the point of forgetting her annoyance in a refreshing afternoon nap, when Signor Giraldi was announced, having only just arrived.

"He might as well have stayed away another hour," said Frau von Wallbach. "Well, it is all the same to me; let dinner be got ready for him, François, and then ask him to come here."

"Signor Giraldi particularly wishes to see you at once, ma'am."

"Very well; it is all the same to me to-day."

Frau von Wallbach had just time to turn her head towards the door as she leant back in her chair, when Giraldi entered. He was still in his travelling dress, having only thrown down his wet cloak in the hall; his black beard, which was usually so carefully arranged, was wild and dishevelled; his calm, dark eyes glowed with a lurid fire; his usually impassive face, that had seemed chiselled in yellow marble, was furrowed and agitated.

"Dear me, how strange you look!" said Frau von Wallbach.

"I must apologise," answered Giraldi; "but I have been travelling since last night, perpetually detained by the most provoking hindrances, and I arrive here at last to learn that the Baroness, with whom I have to talk upon the most important and urgent affairs, is not at home. You can imagine——"

"Do sit down," said Frau von Wallbach. "You make me quite nervous by standing about like that, and talking so quickly."

"I must apologise again," said Giraldi.

"Not at all. I only remained here to receive you, although I tell you fairly that I had rather not have done so."

"Then I will not take up another moment of your valuable time——"

"Do sit still, and don't make any speeches. I never make any, as you know, and am not at all inclined for them to-day. Oh yes, you may look at me as scornfully as you please. I dare say you think me, as other people do, half a child or a fool; but children and fools speak the truth, and the truth, my dear Signor Giraldi, is, that if you had not intermeddled and set everything at sixes and sevens, Carla would be Ottomar's wife by this time, and everything would be properly arranged, while now she is out in this dreadful weather—you must have met them I should think—riding with the Count, although I told her to the Count's face that it was scandalous, to say nothing of her catching her death of cold."

"You cannot possibly hold me responsible for the irresistible impulse which makes heart meet heart," answered Giraldi, with an attempt at his usual supremely ironical smile, which only resulted, however, in an evil grimace.

"Hearts!" said Frau von Wallbach; "stuff! The little heart that Carla ever had was Ottomar's, and no one else's; and there would have been quite enough for matrimony,

at least I know some that have done very well with less. And as for the Count, good heavens! at first she was always telling me that he talked such nonsense, and my husband said so too, and old Countess Kniebreche and every one; and then you came and cried him up to the skies, and of course what you said must be true, and so you have got your own way so far. And why? because it suited you that Ottomar should not marry, but should continue his careless way of living, and get into all sorts of troubles and scrapes, and that you should have him in your power. And you have succeeded very nicely, as Carla would say. But I don't think it nice at all, but perfectly horrid of you; for Ottomar has always been pleasant and good-natured to me, and I like him a thousand times better than the Count; and if I had never respected Elsa before, I should now that I see she does not care one bit for the Count, but has declared honestly, as the Baroness told me and Carla this morning in Elsa's name, that she is going to marry her sailor, although it is rather a strange proceeding for a Fräulein von Werben; but that is her affair; and she has gone with the Baroness to see him at Wissow, or whatever the name of the place is, which is quite right, I think, under the circumstances. I was

to tell you this, and that they would be back in a few hours; and now I will add a few words from myself. You think, perhaps, that you have done something very fine by upsetting Ottomar's and Carla's engagement; and I dare say you are not less pleased at Elsa losing her inheritance in this way, but you are very much mistaken. The Baroness and Elsa are one, heart and soul; and if Ottomar chooses to marry Captain Schmidt's cousin, the Baroness will have no objection, and she will make the brother and sister her heirs, whatever the trustees may say. If I were in her place I should do the same thing. And now here comes François to tell you, I suppose, that your dinner is ready. I wish you a good appetite."

Frau von Wallbach's last words were spoken without the least touch of sarcasm, in the same lazily comfortable way as the former ones, with her pretty head resting sideways against the back of her chair, and her eyes turned away from Giraldi and looking at the ceiling, as if it were all written up there and she were merely reading it off.

But not the most passionate warmth, nor the bitterest attack could have so upset the composure of the man who had sat before her gnawing his white lips, without interrupting

her by a word, and who now rose to leave the room with a silent bow, as this imperturbable calmness and blunt sincerity affected him from a woman whom he had hitherto considered a nonentity, as the emptiest of all empty-headed dolls, and who now dared to tell him this to his very face; to unfold the web of intrigue which he had toiled so hard to spin with all the energy of his crafty mind, and to show him the gaps which his sharp eye had overlooked, his most watchful art had not succeeded in covering, and then calmly to tear it from top to bottom like some worn-out rag!

He had hardly entered the dining-room, where a place had been laid for him at one corner of the large table, before he gave free vent to the fury which had nearly choked him. He stamped, he swore, he tore his beard, like a madman, thought François, who handed him his soup as calmly as if monsieur's wild gestures had been a gymnastic exercise which every gentleman was in the habit of practising before sitting down to dinner after a fatiguing journey and a long drive.

"Why don't you speak?" shrieked Giraldi.

"I am waiting for monsieur's permission."

"Speak, then!"

"I have written all my observations to monsieur with such minuteness——"

"You have written nothing that was worth reading! You did not write me one word about the intimacy that has sprung up between madame and her niece, and which you must have seen if you had eyes in your head. You are either a fool or a traitor."

"I am unfortunate——"

"Don't let me hear any of your confounded long words! I have no time for them. What else do you know?"

"Besides what I told monsieur on his arrival, I know absolutely nothing of importance. Ah! by-the-bye, I had almost forgotten that!"

François slapped his forehead suddenly. He had not forgotten it for a moment; he had been considering all the time that monsieur was in the drawing-room with Frau von Wallbach, whether he should say it or not. He could not speak without betraying madame as he had betrayed monsieur, but for what purpose take money from both if not to betray both? So far everything had gone on well; all he had to consider was that each step to right or left should be well paid; and if he were not greatly deceived, now was the moment to take another step on monsieur's side.

"Will you speak?" cried Giraldi, shaking his fist at him.

"I have forgotten it after all," said François, looking with impudent coolness into Giraldi's face, that was white with passion.

Giraldi dropped his arms.

"How much?" he ejaculated.

"I cannot do it cheaply, monsieur. The matter, in case I can recollect it, is one of the utmost importance for monsieur, and as madame has been lately so extraordinarily kind to me, and has given me, through Madame Feldner, so many sterling proofs of her kindness, and monsieur will of course not trust me in future, but this will undoubtedly be the last service which I shall render monsieur——"

"How much?" shrieked Giraldi.

"Ten thousand francs, monsieur."

Giraldi pulled out a pocket-book from which he took a handful of bank-notes, and threw them on the table.

"Count them!"

"There are three thousand thalers, monsieur."

"Take them and speak!"

François smoothed the notes carefully, put them no less carefully into one side of his

pocket-book, and said, as he took a paper from the other side:

"Monsieur's generosity is adorable, as usual. I should be most deeply ashamed if I were not convinced that monsieur would take this as a fully sufficient equivalent."

And, with a low bow, he handed Giraldi the paper—a copy of Elsa's telegram to her father.

François had hoped that the terror which must now be painted on monsieur's expressive face would produce an interesting variety in the scene; but he flattered himself in vain. Monsieur, who had been trembling all over with rage and fury, and who had gesticulated and raved like a madman, now stood, after glancing in his own rapid fashion over the paper, looking as calm and composed as François had ever yet seen him; and asked, in his usual low inquiring voice:

"When and where was this sent out?"

"This morning, at five o'clock, from Prora, by a man on horseback, whom I sent myself, after I had taken a copy of the open note."

"Then your news is not worth a farthing. The telegraphic communication between Berlin and Sundin has been interrupted since four o'clock this morning."

"Just so, monsieur. That was what the

clerk said who received the telegram, after he had inquired at Sundin and received the answer that he might telegraph through Grünwald; there might be some chance there. Inquiry made at Grünwald. Reply, 'Yes, and on through Stettin.' The messenger, an old trustworthy servant, one of the late Herr von Warnow's, monsieur, took note of everything, and reported it all to mademoiselle in my presence, adding that according to the clerk's report the telegram would reach Berlin rather late, but certainly in the course of the morning."

"In your presence, do you say? How came that?"

François shrugged his shoulders.

"Mademoiselle knows how to appreciate my knowledge in such matters—an old courier, monsieur! To speak the truth, I had myself given the messenger the necessary instructions."

"Why were you not sent?"

François smiled.

"The night was very stormy, monsieur; I am not fond of roughing it. I said I could not ride, and did not know the way."

"But you can ride, and you know the way to Wissow?"

François bowed.

"How far is it, to ride?"

"If one rides fast, one may do it in half an hour."

"Even through the storm?"

"I think so, monsieur."

"And how long would the ladies be, driving?"

"Like the rider, they must take the longest road over the hill and through the villages, monsieur; that could not take less than an hour, monsieur."

Giraldi had taken out his watch and was making a calculation. He put back the watch.

"It is just twenty minutes past four. You must be ready in ten minutes, at latest, to take a letter from me to madame at Wissow."

"Impossible, monsieur; even this morning, at eleven o'clock, Frau von Wallbach, who was bent upon going away, could not get horses; nobody will supply them, monsieur."

"There are the horses which brought me."

"Impossible, monsieur; I saw them, and they are quite exhausted. It must be a good, fresh horse, monsieur, a riding horse. There are none such in the stable."

"You can find one if I give you another thousand thalers in case madame is back at the castle before six o'clock."

"Two thousand, monsieur."

"Good. And now, paper and ink—quick!"

François brought the required materials in a moment from the next room, and Giraldi was already writing at the table beside his untouched dinner, when François left the dining-room to prepare to earn the second sum, if possible, of which he had serious doubts.

Giraldi wrote:

"Your drive to Wissow is a subterfuge or a flight. I forgive your vacillation, even your desertion, which can only be a passing error, for the sake of the love which you bear me, and which I bear you. And if your love is extinct (mine is not!) the accompanying letter, which I copy for you (the original, which I cannot trust to the messenger, I retain in my own hands), will awake new flames from the ashes, as *he* has awoke to life for us, in whose death I could never believe. And as my faith was the stronger, so am I in all things stronger, and would make unrestrained and pitiless use of that strength, no longer for myself, but for our son. You know me, Valerie! As the clock strikes six, I leave the castle for ever, with the Warnow

property, which I carry about me to the last thaler, and which now belongs to mother and son, or to the son alone if it should appear that he has no mother. But it cannot, it will not be. I implore to this end the most holy, the sorrow-laden Mother of God. She who bore all the pangs of maternity will guide a mother's heart!

"GIRALDI.

"Warnow. Half-past four in the afternoon."

He took a letter from his pocket, which he had received last night when he got home from Philip's party, and had first found time to read in the waiting-room at the railway station, and wrote, with a hand that flew like lightning over the paper:

"With failing hands, and eyes darkened by the shadow of death, I write this: Antonio Michele is your son. A very aged woman in Arsoli, who has been known since she suddenly appeared in this place, seven and twenty years ago, under the name of Antonia Falcone, but whose real name is Barbara Cecutti, and who was the mother of that Lazzaro who carried off your child from Pœstum, confessed this to me yesterday on her death-bed. She

was found by the woman Michele in a ravine of the hills above Tivoli, on the verge of starvation, the stolen child beside her almost at the last gasp too, the wounded Lazzaro having breathed his last an hour before, during their flight. The woman Michele took pity upon these unfortunate creatures; the two women swore, on the Host, the one never to say that she had received the child from Barbara, and the other that she had given him to the Michele, so that Barbara might wear out the end of her life undisturbed by the police, and that Father Michele might make no inquiries after the parents of the child, whom his wife pretended to have found on the hills, exposed, like Moses on the shores of the Nile, by a poor girl whom she knew well, but whose name she would not mention. She had never had any children herself, though she had longed for them, and would not part with this one at any price. She carried her secret with her to the grave. Barbara Cecutti also is now no more; and you, my dear sir, receive this legacy from the dead at the hand of a dying man. The ways of God are wonderful! Let us praise His mercies! Amen!

"AMBROSIO."

"DEAR SIR,

"From the hand of a dying man, in-

deed! Our good brother Ambrosio—but just returned from his charitable mission—has this night departed, let us hope, into eternal blessedness, as no purgatory can be needed for him who was a saint on earth. I send you his bequest, and beg you to transfer to my poor convent the expression of your gratitude for the happy tidings which the grace of God has permitted you to receive by means of our brother who is now with Him.

"The Prior of the Convent of
"S. Michele at Tivoli,
"EUGENIO."

Giraldi had just written the last word as the door flew open, admitting François, who wore a long cloak, below which appeared a pair of riding-boots. As he entered he exclaimed:

"Really, monsieur, I am ashamed to have doubted for an instant the luck of such a man! As I went into the courtyard, the Count's groom galloped in, who had been sent back to fetch a pocket-handkerchief which mademoiselle had forgotten! If it had only been an umbrella! In fact, monsieur, they wanted to get rid of the man; we shall hear nothing of either of them before to-morrow morning, you may take my word for it. I

know the style of thing! I explained this to the man after a fashion, and he will let me have his horse. He says that neither man nor devil shall drive him out into this storm again."

"You must remain in my service, François," said Giraldi, laying his hand on the impudent fellow's shoulder. "And now—don't spare the horse."

"Monsieur may depend upon me!" answered François, putting the letter in safety. "*Au revoir,* monsieur!"

François hastened away, and Giraldi went to the deep bow-window which overlooked the courtyard, and watched while he mounted the handsome beast, whose bridle the groom was holding, and, waving his hand towards the window, galloped out of the yard.

Giraldi went back to the table and broke off a piece of bread, which he washed down with the glass of wine that François had poured out for him. Then he began slowly to walk up and down the great room with his arms folded across his chest.

How could he have allowed himself to be so carried away by his passion just now? What had happened for which he might not have been prepared—for which, in fact, he had not been long prepared? The weather was to blame

for the disturbance of his nerves—weather only fit for northern barbarians and those in league with them! It could only have been some unfriendly demon which in the morning twilight had driven the little steamer, that was to have brought him over to the island from Sundin, against a rudderless drifting wreck, and so had forced it to turn back; an unfriendly demon who forbade the rude sailors to take his money and to venture the passage in an open boat, till at last, at half-past eleven, the steamer was repaired, and then took an hour to do the distance—half a nautical mile! Fiend against fiend! Gregorio Giraldi was the stronger. If the telegram had really reached the General at Berlin in proper time —if he left Berlin by the eleven o'clock train, he could not be at Sundin before three o'clock, or at Warnow before six. An hour! Kingdoms had been lost and won in an hour; and everything, everything else was on his side: Ottomar irretrievably entangled in the net which he had cast over him, and already at deadly feud with Wallbach, whose giddy sister was now in love with the Count, to say nothing else! the proud Elsa betrothed to a man of low degree, paying for her love with her inheritance!—the course clear from all obstacles, and at its goal the rich treasures, the great

estates, which now fell to Valerie by law, and which she must leave absolutely to her own son, who had risen from the dead—that is to say, she must leave them to himself! Could she choose to do otherwise? Did any choice remain to her? Must she not submit whether she would or no? And if she wavered—one minute only alone with him—here in this room, in which so often they had in fancy stood together, which she had so minutely described to him that he knew every piece of furniture, every picture on the wall—this especially, the portrait of the man from whose arms he had scornfully torn her, that some day his picture might hang here—the portrait of the new lord, who would pull down this barbaric edifice and build a new castle—the new lord!

He stood before the picture, and looked at it with an evil smile.

"You were the last of your race, with your narrow forehead and the broad ribbon of some high order over your cold heart! and now you are mouldering in the tomb of your ancestors! And he, whom in life you could not vie with, stands still alive here, in his undiminished strength—the peasant's son, who will now be the founder of a race of princes

for whom even the chair of St. Peter shall not be too high!"

A shock like that of an earthquake struck the castle. The windows rattled, the doors flew open and banged to again. The picture, to which he was looking up, and which had hung from its rusty nail for a generation past, shook and fell, so that the mouldered frame broke into fragments, and the picture itself, after standing upright for a moment, fell forward under his feet.

He sprang back.

"Do you still move, accursed dust? Down into hell to his accursed soul!"

And, as if in answer to the master's voice, from the depths of hell to which he had called, howls and yells resounded round Castle Warnow.

CHAPTER VIII.

THEY looked back after the groom as he galloped back to the castle.

"Carla!" said the Count.

He had brought his horse close up to hers; she bent towards him, and he put his right arm round her slender form and kissed her again and again on lips and cheek.

"Bad man!" said Carla.

He hastily put up his hand to remove the veil which the wind was blowing between their faces, and in so doing pulled off her hat.

"Axel, do be sensible!"

She dropped the reins on her horse's neck and tied her veil round her hat.

"Sensible!" cried the Count; "when I am really alone for the first time with the prettiest girl in all the world!"

"You are too bad," said she. She put on

her hat again and secured it; he tried to renew the charming game. "You shall not have another kiss!" cried she, touching her horse with the whip and starting forward.

He soon overtook her, and for a short time they galloped on side by side, lost in each other, eye meeting eye, and often hand touching hand, unheeding the road till both horses suddenly stood still.

"Hallo!" cried the Count. The horses would go no farther; they had long been hardly able to lift their feet out of the swampy ground in which they had now sunk above the fetlock. They were frightened, and tried to turn back. "Pooh!" said the Count; "we know all about that! Wallach has carried me over much worse roads than this; and your horse is much lighter made."

"Come along!" cried Carla.

They urged their horses on; the terrified brutes flew over the uncertain ground, through pools of water, over a wooden bridge, through water again, till the rising ground grew firmer under their feet.

"We have come across," said the Count laughing, "but how we are to get back I do not know. We shall have to stay together for good, I believe. Would that please you, my dear girl?"

They were riding now at a foot's pace to breathe their horses over the higher ground between the brook, which they had just dashed through, and Wissow Head, at the foot of which ran the long line of the railway embankment towards Ahlbeck. The gale was right in their teeth now, so that they felt its full power; and the panting horses were forced to lean forward as if they had a heavy weight behind them, while their riders let the reins hang loosely, not sorry to have their hands at liberty.

"I would pass an eternity with you!" said Carla, as her glowing cheek almost touched his; "but I must be back in an hour."

"Then, by Jove, we should have to turn back at once; I assure you we cannot get through that brook again; I can hardly see the bridge now, though it is only two minutes since we passed it! it is extraordinary! We shall have to go round by Gristow and Damerow." He pointed with the end of his whip back towards the chain of hills. "It is a terribly long round."

"Louisa was so disagreeable."

"Let her be!"

"She will say such horrid things of us to Edward!"

"Let her!"

"You will have a dreadful scene with Edward!"

"So long as I have you——"

"And when you have me——"

"Carla!"

"Hush! Swear to me that when we get back you will declare our engagement in the presence of the Baroness, of Elsa, and of Signor Giraldi, and that this day month we shall be man and wife!"

"Does it need an oath?"

"I will have an oath."

She caught his hand and pressed it to her bosom.

"What shall I swear by? by this little hand? by that fair form? by your own sweet self, which I could devour for love?"

"By your honour!"

The voice had no longer its former coaxing tone—the words came with an effort, as if the raging storm oppressed her.

And his answer, too, came hesitatingly and forced: "Upon my honour!"

His eyes, which before had been raised full of passion towards her, avoided hers; she drew her hand hastily out of his, turned her horse sharply round, and galloped away.

The movement had been so sudden that it was not possible for him to have prevented it.

But now he even held back his horse, which had also turned and wished to follow its companion.

"Shall I let her go?"

That was his first thought, followed by a stream of others: an unavoidable duel with Ottomar, his own desperate financial position, which would hardly be improved by Carla's hundred thousand thalers; the recollection of a cousin in Silesia, who would have brought him a dowry of a million, and a marriage with whom had been proposed to him the other day most unexpectedly—he had been for years at daggers drawn with that branch of the family. And then she who was riding away really did not suit him at all; he was merely in love with her, and had never contemplated marriage.

The spirited horse, already startled by the storm, and seeing its companion disappearing in the distance, reared high, and as its rider forced it down, darted forward like an arrow. The Count could not perhaps at this moment have held it in, but he did not wish to do so; he dug in his spurs, and in a few seconds—his hesitation had been only momentary—had overtaken Carla.

"Carla, Carla!"

"Go! You do not love me!"

He spurred forward so that he could catch the bridle of her horse, then turned and so stopped them both.

"You shall not escape me so!"

She looked at him almost with hatred.

"But, Carla, this is madness!"

"I am mad," murmured she.

"And I am—madly in love with you. But what matter?"

His beautiful white teeth glittered as, putting his arm round her, he laughingly exclaimed: "Will you come with me now?"

"With you? Take me! Take me! I am yours, yours!"

"You foolish darling!"

He pressed kiss after kiss upon her burning lips, then gave back the bridle into her hand, and both turning their horses suddenly round, they rode on side by side in the teeth of the gale—as his horse was the stronger and faster he could do as he pleased—along the gradually sinking ground beside the railway embankment down to Ahlbeck.

They did not speak another word; there was no need.

In Ahlbeck, not far from the beach, stood an inn, which for some years had provided decent entertainment for the summer guests

who could not find accommodation at the more important places along the coast, or who were attracted by the quietness and cheapness of the place; and during the last autumn, by the suggestion and greatly assisted by the money of the Count, the little inn had been turned into a fashionable hotel. It was kept by a young widow — a protégée of the Count's. In the upper story of the house were two rooms, often used by the Count as night quarters when he had stayed out shooting too late to get back to Golm or Golmberg. If the lady and gentleman chose to have these rooms no one would trouble themselves about it, least of all the landlady, who would have quite enough to do with the other guests, the two engineers who were superintending the Railway and Harbour works, the ship's captains and revenue officers, and any one else who might be crowding the public rooms as usual on such a day. And if, after waiting in vain for the groom, he appeared at last, having missed them as they returned home, he might just ride quietly back to Castle Warnow.

Immediately before reaching Ahlbeck the road, which till then had led them over the open ground, suddenly narrowed between two dunes, advanced posts of the chain of sand-

hills along the shore, which formed a sort of doorway, through which, on fine days, might be seen a wonderful view of the village running down to the beach; and beyond the village the beach itself, always covered with boats; and beyond again, the boundless ocean. They had gained this spot by the utmost exertion of their horses, when the panting brutes suddenly fell back, and they themselves, accomplished riders as both were, were nearly flung from their saddles. The force of the storm had closed the space between the two hills as if with iron gates.

"Let us turn back!" said Carla.

The Count did not answer at once; he saw the details of what, to the short-sighted Carla, was only confused mist; the upper part of the village lying nearest to them was half destroyed by the storm, so that hardly a house retained its whole roof, while in the lower part only here and there a house, amongst others the inn and the two great sheds for smoking the herrings, appeared out of a cloud, which at first the Count could not make out at all. It could not possibly be the foam and froth of the storm-beaten surf? If this were the surf, where were the houses which had stood there in a long line close to the beach? Where were the hundred and fifty Ahlbeck

fishing smacks which had come in yesterday on account of the storm? Where the six boats laden with cut stone from Sundin which had anchored yesterday evening at the breakwater? Where the two breakwaters themselves, which had been begun last autumn and during the mild, calm winter and the unusually low tides had been almost finished? Where, above all, the million of thalers which had been also almost entirely spent in the building? Could that infernal Superintendent of Pilots, who was always coming across his path, have been right here after all? That fellow who, at this moment, perhaps, was embracing Elsa as his betrothed, whilst he——

"Over it if we cannot get through it!" cried he, spurring his horse up the hill to the right, while between his teeth he muttered: "I will get something out of the business at any rate."

Carla had followed him.

From above, however, the view was not much more reassuring; it was indeed so fearful that the Count himself, as they forced their horses step by step through the broken bushes, doubted whether they had not better turn back. And what seemed to him even more ominous than the raging sea, was the crowd

of people which his keen eyes could distinguish swarming down below, and as he now perceived hastening in small parties up the ridge of Wissow Head, at the foot of which stood a part of the village. They might be the people who lived nearest to the beach, the navvies, perhaps, who had run up their temporary huts on the level sand. What did it matter to him? Let them help themselves as best they might. The tide had certainly not reached the inn, and that was the principal point. He had carried off Carla from her sister-in-law's guardianship at the castle, under the pretext of showing her the full effect of the storm; it would certainly be near enough to them from the inn windows. And should he carry out his purpose amidst all this tumult? It was madness. The maddest act of his whole life, perhaps, but it should be done!

They were riding again now on the narrow sandy road between the first outlying houses. The Count spurred forward. He was glad that the houses hid the view below; he wanted to draw Carla on, who had again several times anxiously inquired whether they had not better turn back. The rest might be managed; it might not perhaps be so bad as it had seemed to him from above; at any rate Carla had hardly seen anything, and was only

alarmed at the roar of the surf, which had been bad enough certainly from the heights.

But what was that roar compared to the thunder which met them now, as they turned from the narrow way between the first low huts into the broad village street, at whose lower end stood the inn, and which led directly down to the sea. It seemed to the Count strangely short; and indeed the sea, which used to leave several hundred yards of smooth sand uncovered, now flung its waves far up the street. And that street was crowded with crying, shrieking, screaming women and children, and shouting and halloing men, flinging out their goods pell-mell from the houses, rushing back to fetch more, and strewing everything wildly over the ground before the gale brought their houses down about their ears.

"Make way there, make way!" called the Count imperiously.

He did not feel particularly comfortable in this crowd, in which more than one person glared angrily at him, and hardly moved out of the way of the horses. It sounded like a curse, too, which the woman called after him, whom by accident—why did she not get out of the way?—he had knocked down, and who now in the door of her cottage shook both

her fists at him, and then pointing her finger at him called to her neighbours; but the raging storm swallowed up the single human voice.

The Count could not even understand half of what the young engineer called to him, who had suddenly—he could not see whence —rushed up to him, as he persistently pointed down below:

"Breakwater — tremendous breakers — boats wrecked—people furious—get back—happen——"

"What should happen to me?" screamed back the Count in answer.

"Mischief—the lady too—unpardonable of you—too late!"

The young man pointed no longer below, but in the direction from which they had come.

The Count, startled more by the look of terror in the young man's face than by the warning itself, turned in his saddle, and at the same moment set spurs to his horse. He had seen a crowd of men and women—foremost the one who had just threatened him—rushing down the street, brandishing sticks, cudgels, and knives.

His first thought had been to take refuge in the inn, which must afford him shelter till

he could speak a few words to the people, perhaps from the window—fear had evidently driven them wild. And with this purpose, dashing on before Carla, he had almost gained the little open space in front of the inn, when he suddenly discovered that he was only going from bad to worse.

In the middle of the square, lying on its side, the keel turned towards him, lay one of the Sundin boats, which some huge wave must have flung up here, and around the stranded vessel, with the surf at their feet, whose storm-beaten foam was blowing in clouds of spray over them, were dancing and raging—as only madmen or men who had drunk to madness could have raved—a crowd of navvies and sailors who had taken possession of all the provisions the inn could give them, before the approaching flood engulfed everything.

The idea flashed through the Count's head that it was his duty, if any man's, to interpose here, and at least to attempt by his authority to avert the terrible evils that must be brought upon the unhappy village by these madmen, but he had already repeatedly had the most violent scenes with these ruffians, who were always increasing their demands; he would be torn to pieces if the men who

were now pursuing him, urged on by that miserable woman, should join these.

All this passed like lightning through his bewildered brain, but he never thought of Carla for a moment; he was even astonished when, having turned aside from the main street, and dashing at a venture down a side lane to the left, he found himself galloping along the meadows behind the dunes, he suddenly saw Carla again at his side.

"That was done in the nick of time!" cried he; "those scoundrels would have murdered us."

Carla answered not a word. Notwithstanding her extremely short sight, she had been able to form a tolerably correct idea of the danger they had escaped; she knew from the gestures and shouts of the people she had dashed past that it was a matter of life and death to escape them, and she knew also that the man at whose side she now rode had deserted her at the critical moment, and that she had to thank only the speed of her horse and her own powers of riding for her life. Would Ottomar have dashed forward in such a way, careless whether she succeeded in following him or not; whether she escaped from the narrow lanes and little gardens, to do which she had at last been forced to leap a hedge,

amidst the shower of stones and sticks which were hurled after her? "He is a coward," her heart whispered to her; "he only cares for himself; I should only have been his victim."

"This is a bad business," thought the Count. "She is affronted of course, though after all, anybody else would have done the same in my place.—You don't know how those fellows detest me!"

He spoke the last words aloud, by way of saying something at any rate.

Carla answered not a word.

"An infernal business," thought the Count, relapsing into silence.

So they galloped on, side by side, through the sand, which the unceasing rain had fortunately somewhat hardened, along the inner edge of the dunes, which were now the only barrier between them and the sea, which thundered and roared on the other side, often tossing up the broken edges of its waves high enough to shower down upon them in torrents, Fortunately the wooden bridge still stood over the brook which ran into the sea close by Ahlbeck, through a sharp cut in the dunes; the brook even had not overspread its banks so much here as above, where the lower ground offered no opposition to the water; but

the Count thought with a shudder of what might happen when they got to the Pölitz farm, on the edge of the broad hollow which extended to the sea almost entirely unprotected by the dunes. Behind the farm, towards Golmberg, was a still broader and deeper hollow, but he did not trouble himself about that. If once they reached the farm, which itself stood on higher ground, they would find a road leading from it along the back of the hills straight to Warnow. The Count knew the ground well, he had ridden over it fifty times while hunting.

And now they came to the first hollow. On the right, where the hills opened out, was a wall of surf, whose crest threatened at any moment to topple over. More than one wave must have broken through already, which had left smaller and larger pools in the lowest parts of the ground; evidently not a moment was to be lost. But the Count saw that the passage might be ventured, which was fortunate, as in any case it must be tried.

"Follow me boldly, Carla!" he cried, as he again rode forward.

Carla answered not a syllable.

"It is all over between us," said the Count to himself; "she will never forgive me as long as she lives."

They rode on quickly, and had already reached the middle of the hollow, when the Count saw to his horror that the wall of surf, which had stood in the opening of the dunes, was in movement and seemed to be advancing towards them. For one moment he thought it was a delusion of his excited imagination, but only for a moment.

"On! for heaven's sake, on!" he cried, urging his exhausted horse to its utmost speed with whip and spur. He did not look round, he dared not look behind him; he knew from the fearful roar that the wave had flung itself far inland—behind him!

The panting horse staggered up the slope —saved!

He had no need to pull his horse up; it stopped of itself. Carla stopped by his side. How had she got through? He could not tell, and took care not to ask.

And now he looked back.

For a hundred yards at least of the hollow they had crossed, a single stream now carried its dark waters foaming and roaring far inland. The Count saw it with a shudder; there could hardly be a question that the same wave must have broken through above also, on the other side of the Pölitz's farm, and then in all probability the waters would have

united behind the farm. If this were the case, only two places of refuge remained—the farm itself, or the lofty dune—called the White Dune—between the two hollows. The dune stood higher, but was farther off, and it was doubtful whether they could reach it as lower fields lay between it and the farm; besides, what would become of them up there?

"We will go to the farm," said he, "if it were only to give the horses a rest in some sort of shelter; they can't get on any farther."

He rode slowly on in front, Carla followed. Her silence made him furious.

"Little fool!" he muttered between his teeth; "at the very moment when I am risking my life for her! And now to go to Pölitz—after the scene we had yesterday!—a pretty wind up to the whole affair—possibly to spend the whole night there!—I thought so!"

He had reached the highest point behind the farm garden, and for the first time could see beyond; the whole immense space between the farm and the Golmberg was one sea of wild waves! The sea must have broken through here even earlier.

He could see now too how the stream behind him had joined on the left with the sea before him. There was no communication possible now between this place and Warnow;

they were on a long, narrow island, one end of which was lost in the waters towards Warnow, and whose highest point was the White Dune, though it was probably divided again between the farm and the hill.

The Count did not consider the position to be absolutely dangerous, but it was confoundedly disagreeable; and all on account of this mute, perverse young lady, who apparently honoured him with her hatred as thanks for all that he had done for her!

The Count was in a desperate frame of mind, as they now turned the corner of the outhouses towards the entrance to the farmyard. A man, whose rough hair was being blown wildly about his head by the wind, was vainly exerting his giant strength to shut the great wooden gate, the left half of which—the right was already bolted—was fixed to the wall as if by iron clamps by the force of the gale.

"I will help you, Pölitz!" called the Count, "only let us through first!"

The farmer, who had not heard them coming, let go the door which he had just freed, and sprang into the gateway, where he stood with his gigantic form in his torn clothes, his dishevelled hair, his face convulsed with despair and now with furious anger, and his

bleeding hand clenched—a terrible vision to the Count's guilty conscience.

"Come, be reasonable, Pölitz!" he cried.

"Back!" cried the farmer, catching hold of the horse's bridle. "Back! we will die alone! Back with your mistress! I have got one of yours already here!"

The man had thrust back the horse with such violence that it almost fell. The Count pulled it up by a tremendous effort, so that it sprang forward. Pölitz started back to seize the pickaxe with which he had been working, and which lay behind him on the wall of the outhouse. At the same moment the unfastened half of the door was shut between him and those outside with such appalling violence, that the whole door was shattered as if it had been made of glass, and as its splinters fell, the beams of the falling roof of the barn crashed down just in front of the horses, who started back in mad terror, and turning short round, dashed across a fallow-field to the pollarded willows which used to stand at the edge of the common, but behind which now eddied the turbid waters of the invading flood; then turning off to the right, led by their instinct, they followed the field to the dune which rose in dusky whiteness before them. To have guided them would

have been impossible, even if the terrified riders could have thought of such a thing. They were carried as if by the storm itself to the foot of the hill. The panting horses climbed and climbed, and pressed deeper into the sand, which gave way under their hoofs and rolled down into the stream, which rushed from one hollow to the other where a moment before had lain the fallow field between hill and farm.

Carla's horse fell. The Count urged his on a few paces farther, and threw himself from the saddle at the instant when the animal under him fell like a lifeless thing—perhaps really lifeless—into the depths below. With hands and feet he worked his way up, up! cursing his ill luck that had led him to the steepest part, and yet not daring to turn farther to the left, since here at least there was grass and scrub to cling to, while there the smooth sand offered no hold. Drops of anguish trickled from his brow into his eyes —he could see nothing more, could only hear the roaring of the sea as it broke on the other side of the hill, as a confused ringing in his ears. He gained the summit and staggered forward, as his groping hands found no resistance, gathered himself up again, and looked wildly round him.

There, not far from him, lay a dark object.

Was it Carla? How came she here? Dead?

The dark object moved. He tottered forward to her side.

"Carla!"

She raised herself to her knees and stared fixedly at him, as he bent down to lift her up.

But hardly had his hand touched her, than she started up and away from him.

"Wretch!" she shrieked, "I too will die alone! Back to your other mistress! You have one already at the farm!"

She laughed wildly, and the wind, which had carried away her hat, blew her long hair about her, some locks crossing her deadly-white face, distorted now to a ghastly smile.

"She is mad!" muttered the Count, drawing back as far as he could. He could have wished it had been farther. They were on a miserably small strip of ground, which in the centre was shaped like a trough, with sides which yesterday had been at least five feet high, with sharp clear edges, and which the storm had already reduced to two or three feet of smooth surface. How long would it be before the last hand's breadth of sand remaining would be blown into the trough, and they would be left without the smallest

shelter, even supposing that the flood did not rise above the summit?

And should neither of these things happen —should this point remain unsubmerged— the Count shuddered again and again. How could poor human nature endure it all—the driving storm, the torrents of spray which were unceasingly flung up over the hill, the long long night which now began to close in? Already his keen eyes could only just distinguish through the grey mist the dim outlines of the Golmberg, which was hardly a mile off. Wissow Head had entirely disappeared; the farm itself, barely three hundred yards from him, seemed every moment to sink deeper in the water, which, as far as his eye could reach, covered fields and meadows far inland, perhaps even as far as Warnow, which only appeared at intervals out of the mist like a phantom castle. To the right, the thundering, raging, roaring sea, around him the surf creeping higher and higher up the dune, and here and there sending up columns of spray over the already covered line of hills. And there—now seeming so close to him that he drew back in terror, and in the next moment so far off that she might have been on the Golmberg—the dark, motionless figure of the woman whose lips had clung to his only an

hour before—no, no ! no living, loved woman, but a spectre risen from depths of horror, and sitting there, crouched together, immovable, only to drive him mad !

And the wretched man cried aloud in his agony, and clasped his hands before his face and sobbed and whimpered like a child.

CHAPTER IX.

"IT is half-past four," said Elsa, "we must go."

"You might remain here."

"I am not sure whether my father will have arrived yet; indeed, supposing he came by the midday train, he could not be at Warnow yet; but that terrible man is certainly there, expecting you, and perhaps may go away again without waiting for you——"

"I must speak to him," murmured Valerie.

"And you must not speak to him alone; I will not allow it; and so we must go."

"Without taking with us any comfort for you, my poor child!"

"I am comforted, I am quite calm; you can surely perceive that by my voice and manner." And Elsa bent down and kissed her aunt's pale lips.

They were sitting at the window of Rein-

hold's study, on the right hand as you entered the one-storied house, which was imposing compared with its neighbours, which were still smaller.

Elsa had entered almost all of them; the houses of the two chief pilots, and some of those amongst which the four and twenty other pilots were distributed; that of the chief revenue officer, who shared his house with his subordinate; and she would have gone into the other pilots' houses and the fishermen's huts, of which there might be perhaps a dozen, only that it was not necessary, as the people were all standing at their doors wherever she passed, and stretching out their hands to her—the rough, hairy hands of two or three invalided old sailors who crept out from the warm chimney-corners; powerful sunburnt hands from strong, sunburnt women; hard little hands from ruddy, flaxen-haired children, who looked up curiously with their blue eyes to the beautiful strange lady, and could not believe what their mothers told them, that she was no princess, but the Captain's betrothed, who was coming to live here always, and was so pleased with everything! And the Captain would come back, the women all said, though the storm was very high—the worst that Clas Rickmann re-

membered, and he was ninety-two years old, and so might be allowed to know something about it! The Captain knew what he was about, and he had got six men with him who knew what they were about; and last time they had been out three times in the new life-boat without being upset once, and it was not likely to upset now, especially when his own sweetheart had come here to receive him when he returned.

So spoke all the women, in almost identical words, as if they had settled them together beforehand; and then they all had something pleasant to say about the Captain, who was even better than the last Superintendent, though he had been a good man too; and here again they all said pretty nearly the same thing, almost in the same words, with the same hearty expression and the same monotonous voices; but Elsa could have willingly heard it all repeated a thousand times, and thanked each one separately as if she heard it for the first time, and as if it were an announcement from heaven.

And then quite a crowd of women and girls accompanied her, with a still greater crowd of children running beside and after them, to the spot nearly at the end of the peninsula, where, on a high dune, signal-posts and

beacons were erected, and behind the dune—which still afforded some shelter—stood a close group of men in high sea-boots and sou'-westers, looking out over the raging sea, who, as the young lady came up to them, pulled off their hats, while Clas Janssen, as the eldest, took upon himself to be spokesman, and to tell the young lady all about it; and all bent their heads eagerly to listen, and nodded, and when they turned away to spit, took great care to do it to leeward.

Then Clas Janssen related that this morning, as soon as it was light, a vessel, which was now at anchor round there in the bay, had come in and brought word that close to the Grünwald Oie a ship had run aground, and was flying signals of distress. There was so much surf at the spot, that only the mast was altogether visible, and the stern occasionally, and they had seen men clinging to the yards. The vessel—a small Dutch schooner—seemed well built, and might hold out for another hour or two, as it was on smooth sand, if only the heavy sea did not wash off the crew. From the Oie no one could get at them; an ordinary boat would be swamped at once by the waves. Half an hour later the lifeboat had been launched, with the Captain on board, and for three hours they had kept it in sight,

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are with him know what they are about!" half as a prayer which she durst not utter with her lips, half as a song of joy which she was ashamed to sing aloud.

Then she had gone to his house, which was soon to be hers; had drunk tea with her aunt, and had made her lie down to rest—for she was quite exhausted—in a small room, where as little as possible might be heard of the storm, and with a beating heart, like a child whose mother is leading it to the Christmas-tree, had gone over the whole house with Frau Rickmann, old Clas Rickmann's elderly granddaughter, the childless widow of a pilot, who managed Reinhold's house for him. It was a modest house, and modestly furnished; but she admired everything, as if she had been wandering through an enchanted palace. And how clean and tidy everything was! And how tasteful, when Frau Rickmann's province of kitchen and store-rooms was passed, and that of the Captain himself began! The furniture, as if she herself had been consulted in the choice of every article; the large writing-table, covered with books and carefully-arranged papers and pamphlets; and the handsome bookcase, with glass-doors, full of well-bound books, another case of mysterious nautical instruments, and a third with splen-

did shells, corals, and stuffed birds! Then Frau Rickmann opened the door of a little room which adjoined the study, and Elsa nearly exclaimed aloud: it was her own little room next to the drawing-room—the same carpet, the same blue rep covering to the sofa, the same chairs, the same corner looking-glass with a gilt console! And it had only one window too; and in the window was a small arm-chair, and in front of the chair a little work-table—all perfectly charming! And Elsa had to sit down in the chair because her knees shook under her, and to lean her head on the little table and shed a few joyful tears, and kiss the table for love of the man whose tender care seemed enfolding her here like a mantle, and who was now tossing about on the stormy sea which she could see from the window, and risking his precious life for the lives of others!

Meanwhile four o'clock had struck—although it was already so dark that it might have been six—and Frau Rickmann gave it as her opinion that it was high time to see about the Captain's dinner, if the ladies really would have nothing but tea and cakes. She said it as quietly as if the Captain were only rather late in returning from a quiet row on smooth water, though the storm at that mo-

ment was raging more wildly than ever, and the little house was shaken to its foundations.

Aunt Valerie, who could not sleep, came out of her room in terror, to be assured by Frau Rickmann that there was no cause for alarm, as the house would stand a good shaking, and Wissow Head sheltered them from the worst; and as for the flood, they stood like the other houses, fifty feet above high-water mark, and they might wait some time before the tide came up there!

Therewith Frau Rickmann went into the kitchen, after again ushering the ladies into the Captain's study; and here they now sat at the window, which also looked out to sea, each trying to turn her thoughts to that of which she knew the other's heart was full, from time to time exchanging a loving word or a pressure of the hand, till Elsa, noticing the growing uneasiness on her aunt's pale face, pressed for an immediate departure, if only on the ground that the darkness was gathering rapidly, and they could not possibly take the perilous journey back by night.

Frau Rickmann came in with her honest face glowing from the kitchen fire, and took her modest part in the deliberations. The ladies might as well wait another hour; it

would not get darker now before sunset, and the Captain must come in now soon, if her dinner was not to be done to rags.

And Frau Rickmann had hardly spoken, when a finger knocked at the window, and a rough voice outside called: "Boat in sight!"

And then, it was in a bewildering, delicious dream, that Elsa ran down to the beach beside a man in high sea-boots and a curious-looking hat, who, as they ran, told her a long story of which she understood not a word, and she reached the place where she had gone on her arrival under the shelter of the dunes, and then went up on to the dune, where the beacon was now glimmering through the evening mist, amongst a number of other men in high waterproof boots and odd hats, who pointed to the sea and then spoke to her, without her again understanding a single word, and one of whom hung a great pea-jacket over her shoulders and fastened it securely, without her asking him for it or even thanking him. Then suddenly she saw the boat, which she had been looking for persistently, heaven knows where in the misty air, quite close to her; and then she was in another place where the beach was flat and the surf did not roar so fearfully, and she saw the boat again, which seemed now

twice as big as it had been before, and the whole keel was lifted out of the white foam and sunk again, and rose a second time, while some dozens of the men ran into the foam which closed over their heads in spray. And a man came up through the ebbing waves, in high boots and just such another odd hat, and she gave a cry of joy and rushed towards him and threw her arms round him, and he lifted her up and carried her a little way, till she could set her feet again upon the sand; and whether he carried her again, or whether they flew, or walked on side by side, she never knew, and only saw him really when he had changed his clothes and was sitting at his dinner-table, while she poured him out glass after glass of wine, and her aunt sat by smiling, and Frau Rickmann went in and out and brought in mutton chops with steaming-hot potatoes, and ham and eggs, and he, though he never turned his eyes from her, ate everything with the hunger of a man who had not tasted food since seven o'clock that morning. There had been no time for that; it had been a nasty bit of work getting to the stranded vessel, and still worse to take off the poor men through the surf; but it had been successful; they were all saved, the whole eight of them. They had to be put ashore at

Grünwald then, which was another difficult job, and had kept them a long time; but it could not be helped, the poor fellows who had been clinging to the rigging all night were in such a deplorable condition, but they would be all right now.

Intoxicated with the bliss of that flower of happiness which they had plucked from the edge of the abyss, they remarked now for the first time that Aunt Valerie had left them. Elsa, who had no secrets from her Reinhold, explained to him in a few words the poor thing's position, and that they had not now a moment to lose in starting on their disagreeable journey homewards.

"Not a moment!" cried Reinhold, rising; "I will give the necessary orders at once."

"They have already been given," said Valerie, who had heard the last words as she entered; "the carriage is at the door."

The noise of the wheels had been inaudible in the deep sand to the happy lovers, as had been also the approach of the rider, whom Aunt Valerie had seen from the window, and to receive whom she had left the room.

He was there; he ordered her to come! She knew it before she opened the letter which François handed to her. She had read the letter—in the little room to the left,

standing at the open window, while François stood outside—and then the enclosure; and as she read the letter she had laughed aloud, and torn the paper into fragments, and thrown the fragments scornfully from the window, out into the storm which in a moment whirled them away.

"Madame laughs," said François, speaking French as he always did when he wished to be impressive; "but I can assure madame that it is no laughing matter, and that if madame is not back at the castle before six o'clock, something terrible will happen."

"I will come."

François bowed, swung himself into the saddle again, and—to the breathless astonishment of the village children who had been attracted by the unusual spectacle of a horseman—set spurs to his horse, and, with his head bowed almost to the saddle, dashed off, while Valerie begged Frau Rickmann to send for the carriage which had been put into the head pilot's barn up in the village, and then with a heavy heart went to separate the happy pair. But if she made up her mind to a last meeting with her dreaded, hated tyrant, it was only for the sake of those she loved, and for whom in the threatening catastrophe she would save whatever might still

be possible to save! It would not be much —she knew his rapacity—but enough perhaps to secure her Elsa's future, to free poor Ottomar from his difficulties. And she smiled as she thought that even Elsa could believe she was thinking of herself in this matter, of her future!—Good God!

Elsa was ready at once, and Reinhold would not detain her by word or look. He would have dearly liked to go with her, but that was not to be thought of. He must not leave his post now for a single hour; at any moment duty might call upon him again.

And before Elsa had got her cloak on a pilot came in to bring news of the boat which had gone out at two o'clock after the steamer that had been signalled from Wissow Head, asking for a pilot. They had got out to sea in ten minutes and round the Head in half an hour; but the steamer was no longer there, and must meanwhile have doubled the Golmberg and got out to sea, as they had seen for themselves when they had passed the Golmberg. On their way back—about half-past four—they had been alarmed at seeing so much surf on the dunes between the Head and the Golmberg, and had kept inshore as much as possible, to make out if the

sea had broken through there as the Captain had foretold. They could not make quite certain at first, just on account of the heavy sea; but when they went in closer still, so as to be sure, Clas Lachmund first, and then all the rest too, had seen two people on the White Dune, one of whom looked like a woman and had not moved, but the other—a man—had made signs to them. They could not reach them, however, try as they would, and might think themselves lucky that they got off again even, for they had run aground close by the White Dune, and had seen then for certain that the sea had broken in—north and south of the White Dune, and probably at other points too—for they could see nothing but water far inland. How far they could not say; the weather was too hazy. They must be in a bad way at Ahlbeck too; but they had not gone nearer in there, for the people there, with Wissow Head hard by, could be in no danger of losing their lives; but the two people on the White Dune would be in a very bad case if they could not be brought off before night.

"Who can the unfortunate people be?" asked Valerie.

"Shipwrecked folk; what else could they be?" answered Reinhold.

"Good-bye, my Reinhold," said Elsa; and then clinging to him, half laughing, half crying: "Take six more men with you who know what they are about!"

"And you will pledge me your word," said Reinhold, "that the carriage shall not drive down from the village to the castle, if from the height above you cannot see the road absolutely clear through the hollow!"

The two ladies were gone, and Reinhold got ready for his second expedition. It was not exactly his duty, any more than the morning's work had been; only none of the men—not even the best of them—quite knew how to handle the new lifeboat.

Those two people on the dune, however—he had not liked to say so to Elsa—but they could not be shipwrecked people, for any vessel that had gone ashore there would have been signalled long ago from Wissow Head. They could not well be from Pölitz's farm either, though that was close by, for Frau Rickmann had told him when he went to change his clothes, that Pölitz had sent back word by the messenger he had despatched to him, that he would send little Ernst and his men with the live stock to Warnow; but he could not go away himself, neither could Marie, and still less his wife, who had been

confined last night, of a boy. Things could not be so bad with them either.

But things were serious now—very serious—and even if the head pilot Bonsak had a little exaggerated, as he did sometimes in similar cases, there was danger any way; danger for poor Frau Pölitz, who was kept to the house by the most sacred of duties; greater danger still for the two of whom he asked to know nothing but that they were fellow-creatures who without him must perish.

CHAPTER X.

THE large room at the Warnow Inn, filled with the smoke of bad tobacco and the odour of stale beer and spirits, was crowded with the noisy waggoners who had arrived that morning, and who had been joined in the course of the afternoon by two or three drovers, who also thought it pleasanter to remain here. The landlord stood near, snuffing the tallow candles and bawling even louder than his guests, for he must be the best judge whether a railway from Golm direct by Wissow Head to Ahlbeck, without passing by Warnow, were a folly or not. And the Count, who had ridden in that afternoon, would pull a long face when he saw what havoc had been made; but if a man wouldn't hear reason anyhow, he must suffer for it. There were terrible doings at Ahlbeck, he heard, and murder and

fighting too; it served the Ahlbeck people well right, they had been bragging enough lately about their railway station, and their harbour, and their fine hotels; they might draw in their horns again now!

The landlord was so loud and eager in his talk, that he never noticed his wife come in and take the keys of the best rooms upstairs from the board on the door, while the maid took the two brass candlesticks from the cupboard, into which she put candles, and then lighted them and ran after her mistress. He only turned round when some one touched him on the shoulder and asked where he could put up his horses, the ostler said there was no more room.

"No more there is," said the landlord; "where do you come from?"

"From Neuenfähr; the gentlefolks I brought are upstairs now."

"Who are they?" asked the landlord.

"Don't know; a young gentleman and a young lady; something out of the common I should think. I couldn't drive quick enough for 'em; but how's a man to drive fast in this weather? We came a foot's pace. Two horses or one made no difference. A one-horse carriage that was behind us might easily have got ahead. It must have been a

Warnow trap, it turned to the right as we came to the village."

"Jochen Katzenow," said the landlord, "was at Neuenfähr this morning; he's got a devil of a horse! Well, come along; we'll see what can be done; but I don't think we can manage it."

The Neuenfähr man followed the landlord into the hall, where they encountered the gentleman whom he had brought, who took the landlord on one side and spoke to him in an under-tone.

"They won't have done in a hurry," thought the driver, and so went out, unharnessed his horses, and, leaving the carriage standing for the time, led them under the overhanging roof of a barn, where they would be sheltered at any rate from the worst of the storm. He had just spread some horse-cloths over the smoking animals when the gentleman left the house and came up to him.

"I shall probably not remain long here," said the gentleman; "perhaps not more than an hour, and then shall continue our journey."

"Where to, sir?"

"To Prora, or back to Neuenfähr; I do not know yet."

"It can't be done, sir."

"Why not?"

"The horses couldn't do it."

"I know better what horses can do; I will give you my orders by-and-by."

The Neuenfähr man was irritated at the imperious tone in which the gentleman spoke to him, but he did not venture to contradict him. The gentleman, who now wore a great-coat with metal buttons—during the drive he had worn a plain overcoat—turned up the collar as he passed round the shed towards the street. The light from the tap-room fell full upon his face.

"Aha!" said the Neuenfähr man; "I thought as much. One doesn't forget these things, however long one has been in the reserve. Where the devil is the Lieutenant going to?"

Ottomar had obtained full directions from the landlord, and indeed the road which led straight down through the village could not be mistaken. He walked slowly, and often stood still; sometimes because the storm which met him full would not allow him to continue, and sometimes because he had to try and recollect what he wanted to do at the castle. His head was confused with the long drive in an open carriage through this fearful storm, and his heart felt dead within him; he felt as if he had not energy left to tell the

villain to his face that he was a villain. Besides, it ought to be, it must be done in his aunt's presence, if the scoundrel were not to be able to deny everything afterwards, and entangle his aunt again in his web of lies as he had entangled them all. Or was it all an arranged plot between him and his aunt? It looked suspicious that she should have left the castle so early to-day, when he must have been expected to come to call the villain to account. She had gone with Elsa, it was true; but might not the affection which she seemed to bestow upon Elsa—in secret, like all the rest of these dark mysteries—be affection after the pattern of Giraldi's? Perhaps his aunt had undertaken to allure and befool Elsa as Giraldi had done by him; and they had both fallen into the snare, and the crafty fowlers were laughing at their foolish prey. Poor Elsa! who had also no doubt put her faith in these fair promises, and now would have to try how she could get on as the wife of a Superintendent of Pilots with a few hundred thalers, and her home in that miserable fishing hamlet. "That was not what had been looked forward to for her, poor Elsa! That was to have been our inheritance, the castle by the sea, as we called it when we used to lay plans for our future; we were to live there together,

you in one wing and I in the other; and when you married the prince and I the princess we were to draw lots which should have it to themselves; we could not continue together because of all the suite.

"And now, my dearest and best of sisters, you are far from me, waiting for your lover who is out in the storm, perhaps, to save the precious lives of a few herring-fishers; and I——"

At the spot where the road, leaving behind it the first houses in the village, turned downwards through a narrow gorge which led to the hollow whence it again began to rise towards the castle, he sat down upon a stone which projected from the extreme edge of the gorge towards the hollow, and was only held in its hazardous position by the roots of a magnificent fir-tree, which must once have stood much farther from the edge, and which now creaked and groaned as it bent backwards under the pressure of the gale, as if trying to avoid falling into the depths.

"There is no help for either of us," said Ottomar, "it has all crumbled away bit by bit; and we are hanging with our roots in the air. The stone that would gladly have held us up cannot do it; rather the reverse. And if

there come one great storm, such as this, we must both fall. I wish to God we lay there, and that you would fall upon my head and kill me, and that the flood would come and wash us out to sea, and no one should know how we came to our end."

And she? She, whom he had just left in the miserable, dreary inn-room, she, whose kisses he still felt upon his lips, and who, as he went out at the door—thinking, no doubt, that he could not see her—threw herself upon the sofa, and leaning her head upon the back covered her face with her hands, weeping he was certain. For what? for her miserable fate that bound her to a man weaker than herself. She was strong, she would endure it all, come what would. But what could come for her? She had repeated to him a hundred times on the road, that he was not to trouble himself any more about that miserable money; that her father was far too proud to refuse her entreaty, the first she had made to him since she could remember, the last that she would ever make to him. And she had written to her father from Neuenfähr, where they had had to wait half an hour for the carriage. "The thing is done," she had said, as she stroked his hair from his forehead as a mother might have

done to her boy, who had been playing truant from school.

She was the stronger; but then what did she lose? her father?—she seemed never to have really loved him; her comfortable life in her beautiful luxurious home?—what does a girl know of the things that make up her life!—her art? that she could carry with her everywhere; had she not said with a smile, "It will support us both." Of course! she would have to support him now, the disgraced soldier!

The fir-tree, against which he leaned, creaked and groaned like some tormented creature; Ottomar could feel how the roots heaved and twisted, and the soil showered down the steep gorge, while in the branches the wind whistled and howled and crackled like grape-shot or musketry fire, and from the sea came a roar and thunder as if from an endless line of batteries, whose fire was incessantly kept up.

"It would have been so simple then," said Ottomar; "my father would have paid my few debts and would have been proud of me, instead of sending me a pistol now, as if I did not know as well as he that it is all over for Ottomar von Werben; and Elsa would have often and lovingly talked of her brother,

who fell at Vionville. Dear Elsa, how I should like to see her once more!"

He had learned from the landlord that the carriage with the two ladies, if they returned this evening as the driver had told him, must pass this way, it being the only road still practicable; the shorter road through the lower ground was no longer passable. Ottomar wondered what the man meant by the lower ground. The situation was so entirely different from what he had heard described; the sea seemed to be breaking immediately behind the castle, though in the wet, grey mist which was driving in his face he could no longer distinguish individual objects. The castle itself, which must surely be close under his feet, seemed to be a mile off; he could hardly have seen it sometimes, if lights had not been constantly flickering in the windows. In the indistinct masses of building to the left of the castle, which must belong to the farm, lights also glimmered occasionally, shifting their places as if people were running about with lanterns; and once or twice he fancied that he heard men's voices and the lowing of cattle. It might be all a delusion of his senses, which were beginning to fail him, as he sat there unsheltered from the raging storm which was freezing the very

marrow of his bones. He must go on, if he were not to die here like a straggler behind a hedge on the roadside.

And yet he remained; but through his bewildered brain wilder and more confused images chased each other. There was a Christmas-tree with lighted candles, and he and Elsa came to the door hand-in-hand, and their father and mother stood at the table, on which there were dolls for Elsa, and helmet and sword and sabretache for him, and he threw himself joyfully into his father's arms, who lifted him high in the air and kissed him. Then the Christmas-tree changed into a lofty pine, and the crest of the pine was a blazing chandelier, under which he was dancing with Carla, in defiance of the Count, who looked on with furious glances, while the double bass boomed, and the violins squeaked, and the dancing couples whirled in and out: Tettritz with Emilie von Fischbach, that tall Wartenberg with little Fräulein von Strummin. Then it was a bivouac fire with the trumpets sounding to the attack at Vionville, against the batteries which thundered in return, and he called laughingly to Tettritz and Wartenberg, "Now, gentlemen, a bullet through the heart, or the cross on the breast!" and set spurs to his charger, which dashed

straight forward with a wild neigh. Ottomar started to his feet and looked round him in bewilderment. Where was he? at his feet there foamed and hissed a broad eddying stream, and now he heard distinctly a horse neighing—close by him—in the hollow way, at the edge of which he stood, and below him was a carriage which was being backed by the resisting horses against the bank.

With one spring he was behind the carriage and helping the coachman to turn the snorting horses; there was just room left.

"Where are the ladies?"

He had seen that the carriage was empty.

"They got out—above—in such a hurry, by the causeway in the meadows to the park. Oh, Lord! oh, Lord! if only they can get across it! Lord have mercy upon us!"

A wave of the stream which had broken through between the hill and the castle, and which the coachman had nearly driven into, poured into the hollow way, and eddied up under the horses' feet, who could no longer be restrained but dashed up the road, the coachman running by them, having fortunately caught up the reins, and doing his best to stop them.

Ottomar had only understood so much

from the coachman's confused words, made almost unintelligible by the storm, as to gather that Elsa was in danger. What was this causeway? Where was it? He ran after the coachman, calling and shouting to him, but the man did not hear.

CHAPTER XI.

AS Giraldi moved with restless steps up and down the deserted rooms of the castle, there was added to the grey spectres of fear and anxiety which lurked around and followed him, another, that as the twilight deepened grew and grew, and seemed to come nearer and nearer with every movement of the minute-hand of the watch that he never put down. Not merely seemed. He could see it advancing from the windows which looked towards the sea, from the roof of the round tower to which he had made the old servant show him the way; he could see the tide advancing like storming columns which, step by step, slowly but irresistibly, gained ground, following up the skirmishers, which as soon as the main body reached them were swallowed up in it. Over there, where an hour ago he had seen a

narrow line of water running through the lower ground — it was the brook, the old servant said—the foaming waves of a broad gulf were now tossing; there, straight before him, where, to right and left of the little farmyard, he had seen half an hour before dark masses of water in the hollows which he had at first taken for large ponds, was a great lake out of which the farm appeared like a little island. And ten minutes later the foaming lake had joined the gulf, and if this went on for another half hour we should have the flood up here, and not a mouse could creep out of house or courtyard—so said Herr Damberg.

This was said in the courtyard itself. Giraldi had seen the farmer there from the window of the dining-room, and had gone out to question the man.

"For you see," said Herr Damberg, "there is rising ground certainly between us and Pölitz's farm, which reaches from the Golmberg almost up to the brook right across the hollow; but behind it—towards us—the ground sinks again pretty rapidly, to the height opposite where the village stands, and between which and us again is the lowest part of all. If the flood rises above that higher ground which has checked it as yet

the hollow will be filled to the brim like a basin; and I shall think myself lucky if it does not get into my stables and barns, particularly those on the park side, for that will go too. It is very fortunate that the ladies are away; what could they do here? I told Frau von Wallbach too that she had better go up to the village, but she won't. My goodness! there goes another roof!"

The farmer rushed off to the endangered building, from whose thatched roof the gale had torn off whole bales of straw and whirled them like chaff over the courtyard. The terrified farm-servants came running up from all sides, while the farmer grumbled that they had better keep their wits about them now; what was to happen later if they had lost their senses already?

Giraldi looked at his watch, it wanted twenty minutes to six. François, who had returned half an hour before, had sworn that he was convinced that madame would start immediately after him. The road was not so bad as he had thought; they might very well be at the castle at six o'clock.

Giraldi went into the house to question François once more. François was not to be found; some one had seen him a short time

before go through the garden-door towards the park, with a cloak round him.

"The fellow is prudent," said Giraldi to himself; "he has got his money and takes himself off. I am in the same position, I ought to follow his wise example."

He must come to a decision; if Valerie came too late, or not at all, he would find himself in about half an hour face to face with the General, who must have heard this morning at any rate—perhaps from Ottomar himself—of the affair of the bills, and, his suspicions once aroused, would certainly make inquiries, and learn from the banker, to whom he would of course apply first, that the War-now money had been withdrawn from the bank. Elsa's telegram too! All these things coming together would rouse the most sluggish of men, how much more one so active and energetic! And yet everything was not lost, everything might still be won, was won already, if Valerie were on his side; the half million of mortgage money, which he had withdrawn from Lübbener's yesterday, belonged to her by rights; and for himself, without overstepping by one hair's breadth the powers given him by the other trustees, he could withdraw the half million of purchase-money from Haselow, and keep it in his desk,

or carry it on his person if he did not think it secure elsewhere; but Valerie must give her consent—she must, she must, she must!

He cried it aloud, stamping his foot on the wet ground, while in the branches of the trees overhead the wind whistled and howled, and louder and louder grew the roar of the sea breaking against the barrier which it only needed to surmount to fill the hollow like a basin. Even the park would be swept away then.

He hardly knew why he had entered the park; perhaps to look for François, perhaps because he had been told that from the balcony of the summer-house in the south corner a long stretch of the road to Wissow over the hills could be seen. If indeed in the darkness, which seemed deepening at every moment, anything could be seen at a distance! And where was this south corner? As if between the brambles of these rustling hedges, and in the gloom of these creaking boughs, a man could find his way as one would between the laurel bushes and the pines of the Monte Pincio!

In this howling northern wilderness the image of the Eternal City stood suddenly before his mind, as he had seen it that night when, for the first time after years of separa-

tion, he saw Valerie again—by no effort of his, against all expectation or hope—at a fête given by the French Embassy in the enchanted gardens of the Villa Medici. There, when a jealous husband had carried away his beautiful wife only too soon, he himself had left the festive crowd, and ascended the stone steps in the shade of the evergreen oaks till the lights of the festival below him had been lost and the sounds had died away; there, in the darkness and silence which surrounded him, he had mused as he went yet farther and higher, and reached the Belvedere, where his beloved Rome, bathed in moonshine, lay at his feet; there he had sworn by St. Peter's, on whose gigantic dome streams of soft golden light were pouring down from the blue heavens, that the love of this fair northern woman should be the golden stepping-stone to his power, which he, the layman, in the service of St. Peter's, and yet free—free as an eagle here above the world—would extend over the whole earth. It had taken him longer than he had then hoped—much too long; he had held fast to his once formed plans with too obstinate tenacity; he might have attained more brilliant results, quicker and more surely, by other ways such as had a thousand times offered themselves; but it

was the star of his fate which he had followed, in which he had always trusted, and would trust still when—at the last moment—everything seemed to conspire against him to snatch his prey from him, the fruit of the arduous labour of so many years, the noble fortune which he carried about him close to his body, as if it were a part of himself, as it was indeed a part of his life which he would give up only with that life.

He looked at his watch—he could no longer distinguish the numbers on the dial-plate; he sounded the repeater—he could not hear the faint stroke through the roaring of the storm which crashed and howled around him. He would count five minutes more; if she did not come then—so be it!

And there was the summer-house for which he had been looking so long, a wooden erection on four slender columns, to which a narrow steep staircase led up, at the extreme edge of the park, some ten or twelve feet above the enclosing hedge, high enough as he could see from the balcony to overlook the ground outside between the park and the hill; a long trough-shaped bit of ground, some fifty or a hundred yards broad, through which, from the hill to the park, a dark winding causeway led, formed apparently of large stones arranged

at even distances to facilitate the crossing of the low-lying meadow-land.

He examined the position narrowly. In the meadow-land below he could see larger and smaller pools of what must be water already accumulated there; but the stone pathway was decidedly passable. In the comparative lightness of his post of observation he could see his watch now; it wanted ten minutes to six, and there was not a moment to be lost. He would go back through the park to the castle and find out if Valerie had arrived, or perhaps the General. Then, if necessary, back through the park over the causeway to the village; he would hunt up a carriage of some sort, and then—to the devil with this miserable country of barbarians, he would leave it for ever!

He glanced once again over the hills without, along whose edge he ought to have seen the carriage coming. Folly! who could have distinguished anything there now, when over all a dark veil had spread itself which was growing more dense at every moment! Even the stepping-stones in the meadow were hardly visible, he should have trouble in finding them; the dark line waved up and down, the stones seemed in movement. Something was really moving there—that was not the stones. There

were people there—women—two—coming across the stones—she, no doubt, with that detested girl—no matter! she was coming, obedient as ever! to tell him that she would obey him in future as she had always obeyed him! What else should she come for? For fear of him? For love of her newly-found son? no matter!—no matter!—she was coming!

He would not need now to steal away like a thief with the stolen treasure; he might lift his head proudly, he who always and everywhere was master of the position which his ruling spirit had created. He rushed down the steep steps, through the beech avenue, where it was almost completely dark, to the little door which he had noticed before at the entrance to the avenue, and at which he supposed the causeway must end. And at the moment when with a powerful effort he shook the locked or warped door from its rusty hinges, they stood without.

Valerie started back with a shudder, as she so suddenly saw before her the terrible man, who seemed to belong to the darkness and the raging elements. But he had already caught her hand and drawn her into the path, while Elsa, at her aunt's entreating "Let me be alone with him!" unwillingly obeyed her,

and remained standing at the shattered door, following with her keen eyes their retreating figures through the dark pathway, ready and determined to hasten to the poor woman's assistance; straining her ear through the rustling and crackling of the bushes, and the roaring and creaking of the trees, and the raging and howling all round her, for any cry for help.

She stood there gazing, listening—for some fearful minutes, of which she could have counted each second by the beating of her heart. Now she could see them both walking quickly up and down at the lower end of the path; she thought she could catch a few broken words in Italian—an entreating "*Il nostro figlio*" from him—a passionate "*Giammai! giammai!*" from her. Then again the wild raving of the storm and the tide drowned every sound; the figures vanished into the darkness. She could bear her anxiety no longer, she hurried down the path—past something that glided by her—past him, the traitor! the murderer!

She shrieked it aloud, "Traitor! murderer!" The wild scream sounded no louder than an infant's cry. She rushed down the path to the summer-house, crying: "Aunt! aunt!" though she expected to find nothing but

dead body. There—at the foot of the stairs —was her aunt, her dear aunt!

She crouched on the lower steps of the staircase, and lifted upon her knees the fallen form, from whose icy forehead a warm stream trickled. But she still lived! she had attempted to press with her slender fingers the hand which had grasped hers; and now, now! thank heaven! there came a few low words, which Elsa, bending low over her, tried to catch.

"Do not be alarmed! It is nothing—a fall against the railing as he flung me from him; free—Elsa, free!—free!"

Her head sank again on Elsa's bosom, but her heart still beat; it was only a swoon, the result of the terror and loss of blood; she tried to rise and sank back again.

Elsa did not lose her courage; as she bound up the wounded forehead with her own and her aunt's handkerchief and a strip torn from her dress—she had had plenty of practice in the hospitals during the war—she considered whether she should try to carry the slender figure to the castle, or whether it would be better to hasten home alone and procure assistance. She would lose a great deal of time either way; but in the first case she would remain with the sufferer, and need not leave

her alone in this terrible situation, without, perhaps, being able to make her understand that it was necessary to leave her.

Still she decided upon the second alternative as the safer. The bandage was arranged; she was just about to raise her aunt gently from her lap and arrange her as comfortable a couch as possible, when through the bushes, through the hedges, between the trees, there came upon her what seemed like thousands and thousands of serpents, whose hissing sounded even through the howling of the storm, with a strange and horrible noise that made Elsa's blood run chill. For a moment she listened breathlessly, and then with a wild shriek started to her feet, snatching up her aunt, and with the strength of despair dragging her up the steps to save the helpless woman and herself from the flood which had broken over the park. She had hardly reached the last step before the water was pouring through the lower ones, and seeming to be everywhere at once, foaming and roaring through the hedge which ran from the summer-house to the castle, as if over a weir, rushing into the hollow, which was no longer a valley but the bed of a broad stream whose waters, pouring in from either side, met with a crash like thunder, throwing up jets of

water to the balcony, over the edge of which Elsa leant with a shudder.

A bench ran round the inner side of the balcony. Elsa laid her aunt here, who was falling from one fainting fit into another, after wrapping her up as warmly as possible, for the greater part with her own clothes.

And there she sat, with the poor thing's head again in her lap, as the storm howled and the flood roared around her, and shook the frail slender wooden edifice in every joint of its worm-eaten planks, praying that God would send some one to them—the only man who could save them in their fearful need.

CHAPTER XII.

AS Ottomar's steps died away upon the creaking stairs and across the hall, Ferdinanda sprang up, and wringing her hands, paced two or three times up and down the little room; then she threw herself down again as Ottomar had last seen her—her face in her hands, her head leaning against the back of the sofa. But she had not cried then, neither did she cry now; she had no tears to shed; she had no hope left, no wish save one—to die for him since she could not live for him, since her life could only be a burden and a torment to him. Why had she not believed his brother officer, with the clear brow and keen, pitiful eyes, who had said to her:

"You deceive yourself, my dear young lady! Your flight with Ottomar is no deliverance for him from his difficulties, but

another complication, and that the most fatal. The worst point for Ottomar is the terrible wound to his honour as an officer. Appearances at least must be saved here, and this is still possible according to the arrangements I have made. At the best his life can only be half a life, one which I do not know how he will bear. I doubt even if he can bear it; but in such a case as this one may perhaps stifle one's better judgment. There can be no doubt, however, that if you now fly with him, and the circumstance becomes known—as it must be—there will be no longer any possibility for us, his friends, to save even appearances. That an officer should be forced to retire from the service on account of debts, that his betrothal should on this account be broken off, that he should even in his delicate position neglect to call to account the gossips and scandal-bearers—all this may occur, does occur unfortunately only too often. But at the same time, forgive me for saying so, the door is open wide for scandal. A man who at such a moment can think of anything but of saving what still is possible out of the shipwreck of his honour, or, if there is nothing left to save, of giving up with dignity perhaps even life itself—who instead of this drags down with him another person whom he pro-

fesses to love, a stainless woman, a lady who has always been highly respected—that man has thrown away every claim to sympathy or fellow-feeling. Ottomar himself must see this sooner or later. This journey of his to Warnow is, in my eyes, absolute folly. What does he mean to do there? Call Giraldi to account? The Italian will answer, 'You are no child, you must have known what you were about.' Call out the Count? For what cause, when he travels with you? But let him go if he will, only alone! only not with you! I conjure you, not with you! Believe me, the love in whose power you trust to save Ottomar from all his difficulties will prove itself absolutely impotent, even worse; it will finally break down the remains of the strength which Ottomar might otherwise still possess. For his sake—if you will not think of yourself—do not go with him!"

Strange, when he had drawn her on one side at the last moment, while Ottomar and Bertalda in the next room were arranging a few last things, and spoken to her thus—hastily, yet so clearly—his words had passed by her like an empty sound; she had hardly known what he was speaking of; and now it all came back upon her memory word for word! It was all coming true already, word

for word! All-powerful love! Good heavens, what a mockery! What answer had he had for the pictures of the future which she had painted for him in colours whose glow was drawn from her overflowing heart, but a sad, gloomy smile, or monosyllabic absent words, evidently only spoken because he must say something, while his spirit was weighed down with the burden of his thoughts about his angry father, his pitiful or scornful brother officers, and of the possibility of forcing a duel upon Herr von Wallbach or Count Golm. His very caresses when, with a heart full of unutterable fear, she put her arms round him —as a mother round her child whom she is carrying from the flames—his very caresses made her shiver as she thought, "He treats me like a love-sick girl, who must be humoured, like a mistress whom he has taken on his journey, and from whom he wishes to hide that he is weary of her before their first station is passed."

She! she! who had once dreamed that her love was an inexhaustible spring, and had blamed herself that she had been so chary with it, and had turned away her suitor from her door, had left him without in the barren wilderness of life to despair and perish without her! She who had been so proud! so

proud, because she knew that she had boundless wealth to give; that her love was like the storm now raging without, throwing down all that was not stronger than itself—like the flood rushing by, destroying, devouring all that did not rise into the clouds!

That had been her fear all this time, that he too, even he, would never quite understand her; there would always remain a gaping breach between the real and the ideal, and she ought not therefore to sacrifice the ideal, however yearningly her heart might throb, however stormily the warm blood might rush through her veins. She had but this one best thing to lose, to be for ever after poorer than the poorest beggar, she for whom inexorable experience had once for all destroyed the fair dream of so many years—that of being an artist by the grace of God!

How she had fought! how she had struggled through so many weary days, so many wakeful nights passed in gloomy brooding, in writhing despair! days and nights whose terrors would long since have brought even her strength low, if his beloved, fascinating image had not flitted through her feverish morning dreams, alluring her on to other weary days, to other tortured nights.

It was no longer his image now, it was

himself; no longer fascinating, but still beloved as ever!

And oh, how dearly loved! more than ever! immeasurably more in his helpless misery than in his brighter days.

If she could only help him! For herself she had no wish, no desires; God was her witness! And if to-night she lay in his arms, and he in hers, she could think of it without one more heart-beat, without for a moment losing the despairing thought that weighed down her heart: "He will breathe no new strength, no new life from my kisses! He will rise from his bridal couch a weary, broken-down man!" How could she maintain strength and courage to live—no longer for herself alone—for both of them now?

If not strength and courage to live, then at least to die!

If she could die for him! could say to him with her dying lips: "See, death is bliss and joy to me, if I can hope that from this hour you will despise life, and because you despise it, will live a noble and beautiful life, like one who lives only that he may die nobly and gloriously!"

But to his weak soul even this would be no spur, no check, only one more dark shadow amongst all the dark shadows that had fallen

upon his path; and upon that gloomy path he would wander feebly on, inactive, inglorious, to an early and an inglorious grave!

Thus she lay, sunk in the depth of her grief, heedless of the howling of the storm, which perpetually shook the house from roof to cellar; deaf to the noisy uproar of the drunken guests just under her room, hardly raising her head as her landlady now came in. The landlady came to ask her ladyship—as the gentlefolks must mean to spend the night here now—how she would like to have the beds arranged in the next room; but at the strange expression of the beautiful pale face, which raised itself from the sofa and looked at her so oddly, the question died away on the tip of her tongue, and she only succeeded in bringing out her second question: whether she should make a cup of tea for her ladyship? Her ladyship did not seem to understand the question; at any rate she did not answer, and the landlady thought to herself, "She will ring if she wants anything," and went into the bedroom with the candle which she had in her hand, half closing the door—which always took several efforts to shut it—so as not to disturb her ladyship, and then took the candle to the windows, to see if they were properly fastened. One of them was not, the

upper bolt had stuck fast, and as she pulled up the lower one, the wind blowing through the narrow opening put the candle out, which she had set upon the window-sill. "I can find my way, however," thought the landlady, and turned in the dim light towards the beds, but stopped as she came near the door, and heard the lady give a faint cry. "Good gracious!" thought the landlady, "it is almost worse with these fine people than it is with us." For the gentleman, who had come in again, had begun to speak at once, not loudly but evidently warmly. "What could be the matter between the two young people?" thought the landlady, and glided on tiptoe to the door. But she could understand nothing, whether of the many words spoken by the gentleman, or the few interposed by the lady; and then it struck the landlady that it was not the gentleman's clear voice, and that they were neither of them speaking German; and she put her eye to the keyhole, and to her astonishment and terror saw an absolutely strange man standing by the lady in the next room, who as she looked let his brown cloak fall from his shoulders without noticing it, while he violently gesticulated with both arms, and talked faster, and louder and louder, in his incomprehensible jargon—

like a madman, thought the terrified landlady.

"I will not turn back," cried Antonio, "after I have run almost all the way like a dog after his owner who has been carried away by robbers, and the rest of the way have been lying crouched in the straw in a cart like a beast led to slaughter. I will no longer be a dog, I will no longer suffer worse than a beast. I know all now—all—all! how he was faithless to you, the dishonourable coward, that he might go to another, and again from her to you, and lay at your door whimpering for mercy while they settled it for him—his mistress and that accursed Giraldi, whose neck I will wring when and wherever I meet him again, so surely as my name is Antonio Michele! I know all—all—all! And that you will give your fair self to him, as you have given him your soul already!"

The miserable man could not understand the half-scornful, half-melancholy smile which curled the beautiful girl's proud lips.

"Do not laugh!" he shrieked, "or I will kill you!" And then, as she half rose, not from fear, but to repel the maniac: "Forgive me! oh, forgive me! I kill you!—you who are my all, the light and joy of my life; for whom I would let myself be torn in pieces, limb from

limb! for whom I would give every drop of my heart's blood, if you would only allow me to kiss the hem of your garment, to kiss the ground upon which you have trod! How often—how often have I done it without your knowledge—in your studio, the spot where your fair foot has stood, the tool which your dear hand has touched! I ask for so little; I will wait for years—as I have waited for years—and will never weary of serving you, of worshipping you, like the blessed Madonna, till the day comes when you will listen to my prayers!"

He had fallen on his knees in the place where he stood, his wild eyes, his quivering hands raised to her.

"Rise!" said she. "You do not know what you say, nor to whom you say it. I can give you nothing; I have nothing to give. I am so poor, so poor—far poorer than you!"

She was wandering about the little room and wringing her hands, passing by the kneeling man, who, as her dress touched his glowing face, sprang to his feet as though moved by an electric shock.

"I am not poor," he cried; "I am the son of a prince; and more than a prince—I am Michael Angelo; and a greater than Michael

Angelo! I see them coming in moving crowds, singing hymns in praise of the immortal Antonio; bearing flowers, twining garlands, to adorn and encircle the wonderful creations of the divine Antonio! Do you hear? do you hear? There! there!"

From the broad village street there rose up the confused, tumultuous cry of the people, who had been alarmed at the news of the advancing flood, and were hastening to the scene of the catastrophe; from the tower of the neighbouring church there rang out, broken by the storm, the clang of the bells, now threateningly near, and again in trembling distance.

"Do you hear?" cried the maniac. "Do you hear?"

He stood with outstretched arm, smiling; his eyes, lighted with joy and triumph, fixed upon Ferdinanda, who gazed in terror at him.

Suddenly the smile changed to a fearful grimace, his eyes glared with deadly hatred, his outstretched arm was withdrawn with a shudder, his hand convulsively clutched at his breast, as immediately under the window a voice rose, clear and commanding, above the raging of the storm and the shouts of the crowd:

"A rope, a strong rope—the longest that you have got! And thinner cord—as much

as possible. There are some people there already! I shall be there before you!"

A hasty step, taking three or four stairs at once, came up the creaking staircase. The maniac laughed wildly.

The landlady, too, had heard the clear voice below, and the hasty step on the stairs. There would be an accident, for sure, if the gentleman came in now, when that strange, disagreeable man was with the lady! She burst into the room at the moment when the gentleman opened the door on the other side.

Uttering a howl of rage, and brandishing high his stiletto, Antonio rushed upon him. But Ferdinanda had thrown herself between them before Ottomar could cross the threshold, shielding her lover with outspread arms, offering her own bosom to the fatal thrust, and falling without a groan into Ottomar's arms, as the murderer fled past them in cowardly, mad flight at sight of the crime that he had never intended, and that had broken through the night of his insanity as if by a flash of lightning—fled down the stairs, through the crowd below, who had been summoned by the clang of the alarm-bell and the cries of terror of the hasty passers-by from the tap-room and all parts of the house, and who now drew back in terror from the stranger

with the wild black hair, brandishing a knife in his hand—out into the village street, overthrowing all that came in his way in the confused, shrieking, shouting crowd without—out into the howling darkness! And "Murder, murder!" "Stop him!" "Stop the murderer!" rang through the house.

CHAPTER XIII.

"HEAVENS and earth!" cried the Neuenfähr man, "I must go in here! One moment, sir!" and he ran into the house.

The gentleman who was just getting into the carriage drew back, and stamped his foot furiously.

"Is hell itself let loose against me?" he cried, and gnashed his teeth.

As he had made his way cautiously through the darkness a few minutes before to the inn, of which he had taken note as he drove through the village in the afternoon, and where he hoped to find some vehicle to convey him farther, he had met the Neuenfähr driver, who was just harnessing his horses again, for which the landlord, with the best of goodwill, could find no stable-room, at any

rate not before a part of the outhouse was cleared out.

"The horses will catch cold," the man had said to himself; "the best thing after all will be to drive back."

He was still busying himself in the dark over the harness, which had got twisted, when some one who suddenly appeared beside him asked:

"Will you give me a lift, my man?"

"Where to, sir?"

"To Neuenfähr."

"What will you pay, sir?"

"Anything you like."

"Get in, sir!" said the Neuenfähr man, delighted to find that instead of taking his carriage back this long distance empty, he had found a passenger who would pay him anything he liked to ask. He would not take him for nothing, but he must see about this alarm of murder.

"He will not come back in a hurry," muttered the gentleman; "and I shall run the risk of meeting him again; it is almost a miracle that he did not see me."

He had been standing close to Ottomar as the latter gave his orders to the people, and, to give more authority to his words, mentioned his name, and that it was his aunt and sister

who were in danger, and that there was not a moment to lose or it would be too late.

The stranger moved farther into the shadow of the barn before which the carriage stood. He would make sure of not being seen in any case. But just then the Neuenfähr man came back in a state of great excitement.

The young lady had been stabbed and killed, whom he had brought here with the young gentleman! Heavens and earth, if he had known that it was Herr von Werben! and that the beautiful young lady, his wife, would so soon be murdered by a foreign vagabond—the same no doubt whom he had seen hanging about in Neuenfähr, when he drew up at the inn by the bridge—a young fellow with black hair and black eyes; and he had noticed the black hair again as the fellow rushed out of the house—plainly—he could swear to it. The fellow might attack them on the road; he was not afraid for himself—he did not fear the devil; but if the gentleman preferred to remain here—

In his excitement the brandy he had been drinking before had got into the man's head; he would have willingly remained; he was evidently a person of importance here, and the gentleman had quite staggered back when he spoke of the foreign vagabond, and

had muttered something in his black beard which he did not understand.

"Shall we remain here, sir?"

"No, no, no! Drive on! I will give you double what you ask!"

So saying he sprang into the carriage. The Neuenfähr man had meant to ask five thalers, now he would not do it under ten, and so he should get twenty.

For that one might leave even a murder behind one!

"Make way there! Make way!" cried the Neuenfähr man with an oath, cracking his whip loudly over the heads of the dark figures who were running towards him down the village street, and more than one of whom he nearly ran over.

For twenty thalers it was worth while running over somebody—in the dark too!

In the darkness and the storm! It really was worse than before, though then it had been bad enough, and he had said a dozen times, "We had better stop at Faschwitz, sir;" and then as they came to Grausewitz, "We had better stop at Grausewitz, sir;" but the young gentleman—Herr von Werben—had always called out, "Drive on, drive on! Farther, farther!" If he had only known that half an hour later the lady would

have been dead as a door-nail! and he had taken the horse-cloths too to cover her feet, here in this very place!

The fact seemed so important to the Neuenfähr man that he stopped to show the gentleman the very spot, and to breathe his horses a little too, for they could hardly make way at all against the storm. To the right of the road was a steep clay bank some five or six feet high, at whose edge stood two or three willows wildly tossed about by the wind; to the left was level marshy ground reaching down to the sea, which must be about a mile or so off, although they could hear it roaring as if it were close by the roadside.

"On, on!" cried the gentleman.

"Are you in such a hurry, too?" said the Neuenfähr man, and grumbled something about commercial travellers, who were not officers so far as he knew, and need not snap up an old soldier of the reserve in that way; but he whipped his horses up again, when suddenly the gentleman, who had been standing up behind him in the carriage, clutched his shoulder with his right hand, and pointing with the other to the left, cried: "There, that way!"

"Where to?" said the driver.

"No matter where! That way!"

"We can pass it," said the Neuenfähr man, thinking only that the gentleman was afraid that in the narrow road they could not get out of the way of a carriage which had just appeared coming towards them through the grey mist, and might still be a few hundred yards from them.

The gentleman caught him by both shoulders.

"Confound it!" cried the Neuenfähr man. "Are you mad?"

"I will give you a hundred thalers!"

"I'll not be drowned for a hundred thalers!"

"Two hundred!"

"All right!" cried the driver, and whipped up his horses as he turned them to the left from the sandy road down to the marshes. The water oozed up under their feet, but then came firmer ground again. It might not be so bad after all; and two hundred thalers! He called to his horses, and whipped them up again.

They dashed forward as if the devil were behind them; he could hardly keep them in hand. And meanwhile he had gone much farther than he had intended; he had meant only to turn off a little way from the road, and then come back to it again. But when he looked round, the road and the trees had

alike disappeared, as if all had been wiped out with a wet sponge. And from the thick, dark atmosphere the mist was falling so that he could not tell at last whether he ought to go straight on, or turn to right or left. Neither could he trust his ears. Along the road the roaring of the sea had been on his left hand, then in front of him; now there was such an infernal din all round him—could they be already so near the sea?

The fumes of the brandy suddenly vanished from the Neuenfähr man, and instead of them a terrible fear took possession of him. Who was the mysterious passenger who was sitting behind him in the carriage, and who had promised him two hundred thalers if he would avoid the other carriage which was coming towards them? Was he an accomplice of the foreign vagabond? He had just the same black eyes and black hair, and a long black beard too, and just such a curious foreign accent! Was it the devil himself to whom he had sold his miserable soul for two hundred thalers, and who had meant to wring his neck just now when he took him by the shoulders, and who had enticed him out into the marshes this fearful night to make an end of him in the storm and mist? And there were his wife and children at Neuenfähr!

"Good Lord! good Lord!" groaned the man. "Only let me get out of this! I will never do it again, so help me God! Oh Lord! oh Lord!"

The carriage was driving through water; the man could hear it splashing against the wheels. He flogged his horses madly; they reared and kicked, but did not move a step forward.

With one bound the man was off the box beside his horses. There was only one means of safety now—to unharness them and dash forward at their full speed. He had said nothing; the thing spoke for itself. He had thought, too, that the man in the carriage would help him. He had just got the second horse out, and raised his head, when—his hair stood on end, as if all that had passed before were child's play to what he saw now! There had been only one person in the carriage, and now there were two; and the two were taking each other by the throat, and were struggling and shouting together—one of them, his passenger, as if he were asking for mercy, and the other yelling like the very devil himself—and the other was the murderer of that afternoon.

The Neuenfähr man saw no more. With a desperate spring, he threw himself on to the

near horse, and dashed away, the other horse galloping beside him. The water splashed over him, and then he was up to his waist in water, and then up to his neck and the horses swimming; and again he had dry land under him, and got on to firm ground, and the horses stopped because they could go no farther, and the one on which he sat had trembled so that he had nearly fallen off. And he looked round to see what had happened and where he was.

He was on rising ground, and before him lay a village. It could only be Faschwitz; but Faschwitz was two or three miles in a straight line from the sea, and there behind him, from where he came—it was a little clearer now, so that he could see some little distance—was the open sea, rising in fearful waves, which roared and foamed, as they rolled farther and farther—who could tell how far inland?

"They have been drowned like kittens, and my beautiful new carriage. May the——"

But the Neuenfähr man felt as if he could not swear just then.

He dismounted, took the horses by the bridle, and led them, almost exhausted, at a foot's pace into Faschwitz, his own knees trembling at every step.

CHAPTER XIV.

"THAT won't do," cried the village Mayor; "haul it in again!"

"Ho! heave ho!" cried the thirty men who had hold of the rope. "Ho! heave ho!"

They had hurriedly constructed a kind of raft from a few beams, boards, and doors torn from the nearest houses, and let it go into the stream experimentally. Instantly it had been whirled round and upset, and the thirty men had enough to do to haul it on shore again.

For what had been the side of the hill was now the shore of a rushing, foaming stream. And on the hill-side half the village was already collected, and others were ever breathlessly joining the crowd. There was no danger for the village; the nearest houses stood ten or fifteen feet above the water, and it seemed impossible that it should rise so

much, more especially as in the last few minutes it had already gone down about a foot. The gale had shifted more to the north, the incoming flood would be driven towards the headland; and although the storm still raged with unabated fury, it had grown a little lighter. The first comers had no need now to point out the place to the new arrivals; every one could see the whitewashed balcony on the other side, and the dark women's figures—once there were two, then again only one, who at first, said the first comers, had waved her handkerchief constantly, but now sat crouched in a corner, as if she had given up all hope, and was resignedly awaiting her fate.

And yet it seemed as if the work of deliverance must succeed. The distance was so small; a strong man could throw a stone across. They had even—foolishly—tried it, the best thrower amongst them had flung a stone, fastened to the end of a thin cord; but the stone had not flown ten feet, and with the cord had been blown away like gossamer. And now a huge wave from the other side rolled through the park, broke over the balcony, and, joining the stream, ran up to the top of the bank. The women shrieked aloud, the men looked at each other with grave, anxious faces.

"It won't do, boys!" said the Mayor; "long before we can get the raft across, the thing over there will have given way. Another such wave, and it must be knocked to pieces; I know it well, the pillars are not six inches across, and worm-eaten besides."

"And if we got to the other side and ran against it we should go to pieces and be upset ourselves," said Jochen Becker, the blacksmith.

"And there would be ten of us in the water instead of two," said Carl Peters, the carpenter.

"There is no good talking like that," said the Mayor; "we can't let them be drowned there before our very eyes. We'll take the raft thirty yards higher up, and the men must go off at once; I'll go with it myself. Haul away, my men. Ho! heave ho!"

A hundred hands were ready to drag the raft up stream. But thirty yards were not enough, it would require twice as much. Half-a-dozen courageous men had been found, too, to make the attempt; the Mayor might stay behind; who else was to command those who held the ropes? And that was the principal matter!

With long poles they steadied themselves on the raft. "Let go!" The raft shot

out like an arrow into the centre of the stream.

"Hurrah!" cried those on shore, thinking the object already attained, fearing only that the raft would be carried into the park and driven against the trees.

But suddenly they came to a standstill; not a foot farther would it go, but danced about in midstream till the six men on board were forced to throw themselves down and cling fast, then darted down like an arrow against the near shore, to the spot where they had stood before. It took all the strength of the fifty men there assembled to hold it in, and it was only by the greatest exertion and with much apparent danger that the six men got safely off the raft and up the steep bank.

"This won't do, boys!" said the Mayor. "I wish the Lieutenant would come back; they are his relations. He drives us down here, and then doesn't come himself."

The slight increase of light they had had, when the driving mist was partly blown aside, had disappeared again. Hitherto the leaden sky and dense storm-driven mist had made the evening seem like night; but now the real night was drawing in. Only a very sharp eye could still distinguish the black figure on the balcony, and even the balcony itself was

not visible to all. At the same time the gale decidedly increased in violence, and had again veered from north-east to south-east, while the water rose considerably in consequence of the backward flow from Wissow Head. Now might have been a good opportunity, as the velocity of the stream was thus diminished; but no one had the heart to renew the hopeless effort. If there were no means of getting a rope over to the other side and fastening it there, so that some men might pass over the frail bridge to guide the raft over from that side, there was no hope.

So thought the Mayor, and the rest agreed with him. But they had to shout it into each other's ears; no word spoken in an ordinary tone could have been heard through the fearful uproar.

Suddenly Ottomar stood amongst them. He had taken in the whole position at a glance. "A rope here!" he cried, "and lights! The willows there!"

They understood him at once; the four old hollow willow-trunks close to the edge! Let them be set on fire! It was true, if they could succeed in doing it, there would be danger to the village; but no one thought of that. They rushed to the nearest houses and dragged out armfuls of fir-wood and pitch, and

thrust it all into the hollow trunks, which fortunately opened to westward. Two or three vain efforts—and then it flamed up—blazing, crackling—sometimes flaming high, sometimes sinking down again — throwing shifting lights upon the hundreds of pale faces which were all turned with anxious gaze upon the man who, with the rope round his body, was fighting with the stream.

Would he hold out ?

More than one pair of rugged hands was clasped in prayer; women were on their knees, sobbing, wailing, pressing their nails into their hands, tearing their hair, shrieking aloud madly, as another fearful wave came up and rolled over him, and he disappeared in the billows.

But there he was again; he had been thrown back nearly half the distance which he had already won—in another minute he had recovered it. He had been carried down some way, too; but he had chosen his point of departure well, the summer-house was still far below him; he was traversing the stream as if by a miracle.

And now he was in the middle, at the worst place; they had known it to be that from the first. He did not seem to make any progress, but slid slowly down stream. Still the sum-

mer-house was far below him; if he could pass the centre, he might, he must succeed!

And now he was evidently gaining ground, nearer and nearer, foot by foot, in an even, slanting line towards the balcony! Rough, surly men, who had been at enmity all their lives, had grasped each other's hands; women fell sobbing into one another's arms. A gentleman with close-cut grey hair and thick grey moustache, who had just arrived, breathless, from the village, stood close to the burning willows, almost touched by the flames, and followed the swimmer with fixed gaze, and fervent prayers and promises—that all, all should be forgiven and forgotten if he might only receive him back—his beloved, heroic son. Suddenly he gave a loud cry—a terrible cry—which the storm swallowed up, and rushed down to the bank where the men stood who had hold of the rope, calling to them to "Haul in, haul in!"

It was too late.

Shooting down the current came the great pine-tree, at the foot of which the swimmer had sat half an hour ago, torn up by the storm, hurled into the flood, whirled round by the eddying waters like some monster risen from the deep, now showing its mighty roots still

grasping the stone, now lifting its head, now rising erect as it had once stood in the sunshine, and the next moment crashing down over the swimmer—upon him—then, with its head sunk in the foaming whirlpool and the roots raised above, it went out from the realm of light down into the dark night.

Strangely enough, the slender cord had not been broken, and they drew him back—a dead man, at whose side, as he lay stretched on the bank, with only one broad, gaping wound upon his forehead, like a soldier who has met his death gallantly, the old man with the grey moustache knelt and kissed the dead lips of the beautiful pale mouth, and then rose to his feet.

"Give me the rope now! He was my son! And my daughter is there!"

It seemed insanity. They had seen how the young man had battled—but the old one! He threw off coat and waistcoat. He might be an old man—but he was still a strong man, with a broad powerful chest.

"If you feel that you can't keep up, General, give us a signal in good time," said the Mayor.

And now there happened what, to the people who in this one hour had seen such

strange and terrible horrors, seemed a miracle. The blazing willow-stumps, which were burning now from the roots to the stiff branches, threw a light almost like day over the bank, the crowd, the stream, and the summer-house opposite—far into the flooded park up to the castle, whose windows here and there gave back a crimson reflection of the flames.

And in this light, floating down the narrow stream, on whose grassy bed the village children were wont to play, down the foaming current which had just now whirled along the branching pine-tree, like a sea-monster stretching out a hundred feelers for its prey, there came a slender well-built boat, that had just landed a strange cargo at the back entrance of the castle, as if at a quay. They had heard there how matters stood, and the man sitting at the helm had said: "My men, she is my betrothed!" And the six others had shouted, "Hurrah for the Captain! and hurrah for his betrothed!" And now they shot past with lowered mast, and the crew holding their oars erect, as if they were bringing the Admiral on shore in his own boat. And the flag fluttered behind the man who sat at the helm, and with a light touch of his strong hand guided the willing vessel through

the eddying foam to the goal which the clear keen eyes held fast, as the eagle his prey, however wildly the brave heart might beat against his bosom.

So they shot past—past the crowd who gazed breathlessly at the miracle, past the summer-house, but only a few yards. Then the man at the helm turned the boat suddenly like an eagle in its flight; and the six men took to their oars, at one stroke—and "Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!"—the oars were withdrawn again, and the boat lay alongside the balcony, over which and over the boat an immense wave reared its foaming crest towards the bank, and there breaking threw its spray up into the burning trees, covering the breathless lookers-on with a cloud of moisture.

And as the cloud dispersed, they saw in the dim light of the decaying fire that the summer-house was gone, and there was only left a shadowy boat that vanished into the darkness.

They drew a long breath then, as if from a single oppressed spirit relieved from a weight of fear. And "Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!" resounded as if from a single throat, rising above even the howling storm.

The boat might disappear in the darkness,

but they knew that the man sitting at the helm knew what he was about, and the six men who were with him knew what they were about; and it would return in safety, carrying the rescued from storm and flood.

CHAPTER XV.

THE setting sun no longer stood high above the hills. In the magic glow were shining the calm pools of water which covered the immense semicircle between the Golmberg and Wissow Head. The slanting golden rays shone dazzlingly in Reinhold's eyes, as he steered his boat from the lake into the broad gulf close by the White Dune, against whose steep sides the long incoming waves were washing, while the boat glided over its broad surface, and the blades of the oars as they rose and sank in regular cadence almost touched the edge.

The eyes of the rowers were turned towards the dune as they glided by, while the scene of deliverance on the night of the storm must have recurred to every man's memory, but no one spoke a word. Not because it would have been a breach of disci-

pline. They knew that the Captain would always allow talk that was to the purpose at the right time, even when as to-day he was in full uniform, with the Iron Cross on his broad breast; but he had pulled his cocked hat low down upon his forehead, and if he occasionally raised his eyes to see the course he was steering, they did not look gloomy—they had never seen him look gloomy yet, any more than they had ever heard a bad word from his mouth—but very grave and sad. They would not disturb the Captain's meditations.

Grave and sad meditations—graver and sadder than the honest fellows could imagine or comprehend.

What to them were the two people whom they had rescued from death on this sand-hill, with untold efforts and at the repeated risk of their own lives; what were they to them but a couple more fellow-creatures, saved as a matter of duty, and added to the others whom they had already saved that day? As to how Count Golm and the young lady had got there, and the relation in which they stood to each other—what did they care about that? But he!

He had shuddered when he found the brilliant Carla von Wallbach, whom he had

seen a few days before flirting and coquetting in the light of the chandeliers, in the drawing-room at Warnow—now cowering on the storm-beaten dune, a picture of utter misery, her clothes soaked through with wet, her tender limbs shaken by icy cold, half out of her senses with terror, and hardly resembling a human creature; as he carried her to the boat, and at the moment when he laid her down, she woke from her stupor, and recognising him, shrieked wildly: "Save me from him! Save me!" and clung terrified to him —a stranger—as a child might cling to his mother, so that he had to use force to free himself!

The Count was in a hardly less pitiable condition, when two of the men carried him into the boat and laid him down near Carla; but then he suddenly started up, and at the risk of falling overboard staggered to the bow of the boat, and there sat lost in gloomy meditation, taking no notice of anything that passed, till they had worked their way to the Pölitz's farm, and prepared to take the poor wretches there into the boat through the window of the attic in which they had taken refuge. Then he had sprung to his feet, and shrieked like a madman that he would not be packed in together with those

people! he would not! and had laid violent hands on the men, till he was cowed by the threat that they would tie his hands if he did not implicitly obey the Captain's orders; and then, covering his face with his hands, he had devoured his wrath in silence.

There was the attic, there was the window opening—they had been obliged to tear out the window and knock down a bit of the wall to make room. It seemed to Reinhold himself almost a miracle that he had been successful, that he had been able to save the poor creatures from this abyss of misery, and carry the most fragile human blossom through night and storm and darkness to the safe harbour of the castle where all danger was over.

The passage from the submerged farm to the castle had only lasted a few minutes—the gale had driven the boat before it like a feather—but this was the only time when even his heart had trembled, not with fear, but with tender care. His eyes grew wet as he recalled the memory now of the mother as she lay in the boat, her little one in her bosom, her head on her husband's knee, while poor Marie, full of compassion, supported in her arms the senseless Carla. What would the wretched man in the bow of the boat have thought of this sight if he ever raised his eyes?

When they laid the boat alongside the back entrance of the castle, he sprang out and rushed away in furious haste, to hide himself anywhere in the darkness—like Cain fleeing from the body of his murdered brother.

And sadder and sadder grew Reinhold's thoughts. He had succeeded even in his highest hopes—he had rescued his beloved from certain death, and with her the unhappy woman who loved them both as if they had been her children, and whom they both loved and honoured as a mother. So far was all the deepest happiness; and yet! and yet!

How dearly had that happiness been bought! Could it be happiness that cost so high a price? Was there still left any happiness on earth, when sorrow in pitiless shape lay so close at hand—even as the purple shadows yonder between the battlements and projections of the castle lay close against the patches of sunlight? Did not the most apparently firm ground quake, just as the waves here were dancing over the field where the countryman used to drive his plough, over the meadow where the shepherd had tended his flock? Must they needs die—so young, so beautiful, so richly dowered with the noblest gifts and qualities? And if they must die, since they could no longer—would

no longer live, since death was to them only a deliverance from inextricable entanglements —what a doubtful good seemed life which brought with it even the possibility of so terrible a fate! How could the two fathers bear it? Nobly, no doubt. And yet! and yet!

They rowed round the castle and the park, and drew near the shore at the spot where the willows had been burnt that night, and where the blackened stumps still rose above the bank. Several large and small boats lay there already from Ahlbeck, and even from villages farther distant along the coast. From all parts—from miles around—they had come, for everywhere for miles around had the story been repeated from mouth to mouth, with many variations, yet always the same—the touching story of the youth who loved a maiden; of how the two had fled from home, but could find no happiness or peace; and now both were dead, and were to be buried to-day.

Reinhold turned his steps from the shore to the village. The President had written to him that he should be at Warnow at the appointed time, and wished to speak to him before he met the family. He knew the worthy man's punctuality; and, indeed, he had hardly reached the open space in front

of the inn, where a whole army of vehicles was already assembled, before a carriage drove up, from which the President alighted, and the moment he saw him came towards him with extended hand.

An expression of almost fatherly goodwill lay in his silent greeting; for the good man was too much moved to be able to speak at once, until, after walking a few steps side by side, he began, with a melancholy smile:

"Prophets both of us! Yes, my dear young friend; and what would we not give to have been found false prophets, and that our storm-floods had never come! But here they are, however. Yours, thank God, has quickly exhausted its fury; mine—God help us!—must rage for a long time yet. I wish such another valiant St. George might arise there too, to fight the dragon so boldly and save the poor victims! I am proud of you, my dear friend; there can be few people who rejoice so heartily in the gallant deeds which, by God's good help, you have performed. To have saved so many human lives—even if your betrothed had not been of the number—how happy you must be! It will not add to your happiness—I mean it will not increase the joy with which your heart must be full—but it is right and proper that such

good service should meet with its proper recognition in the eyes of the world. Neither has your former conduct, which roused so much ill-feeling at the time, been forgotten. Had your advice been followed, the unfortunate harbour works at least would never have been begun, and millions and millions would have been spared to our poor country, to say nothing of the damage done. The Minister thinks that such heads should not be left idle; he has telegraphed to me, in answer to my brief report of the events here, desiring me to offer you, in his Majesty's name, the medal and ribbon of the Order of Merit given for saving life, and to ask you, in his own name, whether you are disposed to enter his office in any capacity—as Naval Councillor, I imagine; but of that you would hear from himself personally; or possibly in the Admiralty Office—the two gentlemen seem inclined to dispute over you. I think I know your answer—you would like to remain here for the present—and I should most reluctantly lose you just now. But keep yourself disengaged for the future; you owe it to the public good and to yourself. Am I not right?"

"Perfectly so," said Reinhold; "it is my warmest wish and firm resolve to serve my king and country, by land or water, wherever

or however I can. Any summons that comes to me will always find me ready; although, indeed, I do not deny that I should most reluctantly leave this place."

"I can believe that," said the President. "A man like you puts his whole soul into everything, and is absorbed by his duties, be they small or great; and you have proved that great things can be done in comparatively insignificant positions. But the matter has its social side too, which it would be false heroism to overlook. The thorough appreciation of your services in the highest places will be gratifying to your poor father-in-law, and he would feel himself, besides, terribly lonely in Berlin without his daughter near him."

"How kind you are!" said Reinhold, much touched. "How you have thought of everything!"

"Have I not?" said the President, responding warmly to the pressure of Reinhold's hand. "It is wonderful! But I have the honour of being a friend of the family; you yourself acknowledged me in that capacity, when, at the same time with the official report of the events of the flood, you sent me a private account of what had concerned yourself and the family to which you now belong.

I feel myself honoured by your confidence; I need not say that it will all remain buried in heart. But you did right; in such complicated affairs it is better not to trust to oneself, but to make use of the experience and judgment of one's friends. And who could be better placed than I to give advice and assistance in this case? I have thought over everything already, and settled a good deal in my own mind, and have even taken some preliminary steps, which have met with the readiest concurrence on all sides. We will speak of this more at length when you come to see me at Sundin, which you must do shortly. For to-day, as I must return immediately after the funeral, I will only say this: I am certain that the estates of your aunt the Baroness may be saved, as both Golm and the Company are bankrupt, and must be satisfied with any reasonable conditions. I shall not offer them favourable ones, you may be sure! These men, who have brought such untold misery upon thousands, deserve no mercy! Even so there will remain only the ruins of a magnificent property, for the principal part is lost for ever, I fear, with that terrible man Giraldi. Or do you not think so?"

"Indeed I do," said Reinhold. "I supposed

so from the first; and the account given by the man who drove him, and whom I afterwards thoroughly questioned and examined, confirmed my supposition. The influx of the tide between Wissow Head and Faschwitz was so frightfully violent that the waters that first entered the so-formed gulf must have been emptied out by the succeeding waves as out of a basin, with everything that was floating in it. The water thus forced out would join the immense stream running westwards into the open sea between the mainland and the island, and if the corpse should ever, weeks hence, perhaps months hence, be carried to some distant shore——"

"It is a pity, a great pity," said the President; "such a magnificent property! According to my calculations, and the expressions used by that dreadful man in his last interview with the Baroness, not less than a million. How much good might have been done with it! And in your hands, too. But then it would be a terrible thing to come into such an inheritance. And the Baroness, too; are the dreadful details known to her?"

"She knows that Antonio was the murderer of my poor cousin; and she knows also that the two Italians met in their flight, and were drowned together. I hope the unutterable

horror that the man's account reveals to us will remain for ever hidden from her."

"She does not believe in the son?"

"Not in the least! It is as if God in His mercy had blinded her usually quick eyes on this point. She takes the whole thing for an invention and sheer lie of Giraldi's. You may suppose that we strengthen her in this idea, and thank the fates on this ground at least for the darkness that has swallowed up what never ought to see the light of day."

"True, true!" said the President; "that is a comfort, certainly. The unhappy lady has suffered enough already. The fates have not been so merciful to your poor uncle. It is terrible to lose such a daughter—so beautiful and gifted—in such a way; but for a man such as your uncle from all I hear must be, so high-minded and upright, to be haunted by the vision of a son who is pursued whichever way he turns by warrants and detectives; for such sorrow as that I think no greatness of mind, no philosophy can be of any use; it is utterly horrible, without the least hope of consolation. Such grief cannot be alleviated by even time, which cures most troubles; death alone can bring relief; but the man will not let himself die."

"I do not know," said Reinhold; "he is

one of a family who do not fear death. However differently in some points the poor man may see life, I can easily imagine that even to him the question may present itself in a form which he understands, and that he may then not hesitate for a moment in his decision."

The faintest glimmer of a sarcastic smile played round the President's delicately-cut lips; he was about to say, with some courteous periphrases, that he quite understood family pride, even when as in this case it clearly overshot the mark; but a loud shout from a rough voice close by them left him no time. The shouter was Herr von Strummin, who with Justus came so quickly down the lane which led from the High Street of the village to the parsonage, that Reinhold, who had already received notice of his friend's arrival early that morning, had no time to explain to the President the connection between the two men. However, before Herr von Strummin had offered his hand to the President, he called out:

"Allow me the honour, President, to introduce my son-in-law—Herr Justus Anders, celebrated sculptor! Gold medallist, President! Came this morning from Berlin with my daughter, in company with your aunt,

Captain Schmidt. Has already by desire of the Baroness taken the arrangements into his hands, cleared out the whole of the big ground-floor saloon; looks like the church at Strummin. Yes, my dear President, an artist you know; we must all give way to him. And now, only think, President, the clergyman cannot, or rather will not, say the last words over the grave! declines doing so at the last moment! We—my son-in-law and I—have just come from him; he would not receive us—can't speak to anybody—can't speak at all! Conveniently hoarse! The parsonage of Golm, which the Count has promised him, sticks in his throat, I dare say! And it is a good mouthful—three thousand thalers a year, without the perquisites. But I should think the authorities would refuse their sanction; the toad-eating, hypocritical——"

"But, my dear Herr von Strummin!" said the President, looking round nervously.

"It is true enough!" cried Herr von Strummin; "the Count has forbidden him; the Count and he are always laying their heads together. My son-in-law——"

The two friends could not hear what Herr von Strummin, who at last, at the President's repeated request, moderated his loud voice,

brought forward in further support of his views. They had dropped behind a little way, to clasp each other's hands again and again with tears in their eyes.

"Yesterday at the same hour we buried Cilli," said Justus. "Ferdinanda's Pietà, which I will finish, is to adorn her grave, and to make known to the world what a treasure of goodness, and love, and mercy lies buried there; and I will erect a monument to the two here. I told Meta my idea for doing it on the way here; she says it will be splendid; but how gladly would I really break stones for the rest of my life, as my father-in-law used to say of me, if I could awake to life again the good, the beautiful, the brave.—Your naval uniform is wonderfully becoming, Reinhold! I ought to have taken your portrait so; we must repeat it some day; the large gold epaulettes are splendid for modelling. And that parson won't read the funeral oration because the General and Uncle Ernst have determined that the two shall rest in one grave! He implored the General to alter the arrangement; they had not even been publicly betrothed! only think! But the General stood firm, and has asked your uncle to say a few words. Even that the parson won't have; but the two old gentle-

men will not give in; they hold together like brothers. A telegram came just now for your uncle; I was with him when he opened it, and saw how he started; I am certain it has something to do with that unfortunate Philip, he has been arrested probably. It is terrible that your uncle must have that to bear too, on such a day as this; but he has said nothing to any one excepting the General. I saw them go aside together, and he showed him the telegram, and then they talked together for some time, and at last shook hands. Uncle Ernst, who had vowed that the hand which pressed the General's should wither! And to-day he has asked me half-a-dozen times if I believe that Ottomar's brother officers, who are expected, will really come—we have made the funeral so late on their account—it would be too sad for the General if they stayed away! As if he had no sorrows himself! He is really heroic! But your Elsa is admirable too. She loved her brother dearly, but how quietly she moves and speaks now, and arranges everything, and has a willing ear and a kindly word for every one. 'I could not do that, you know,' says Meta; 'there is only one Elsa, you know.' Of course I know it! But there is only one Meta too; don't you think so?"

"My dear son-in-law!" cried Herr von Strummin, looking back.

"He has called me that at least a hundred times already to-day!" said Justus with a sigh, as he hastened on, lengthening his short steps.

They had reached the upper end of the deep narrow cutting, and saw the castle now immediately in front of them. It was a strange sight to the President, who had formerly known the place well, and whom Reinhold now led a few steps forward to the precipitous edge of the bank. For the stream had so washed and torn away the soil that here and there the bank positively overhung, and Reinhold could no longer find and show to the President the spot where the pine-tree had stood, whose fall had been fatal to Ottomar. Below them, between the steep bank and the castle, the stream still ran, no longer with the foaming waves and roaring whirlpools of that night of terror, but in calm transparent ripples, which met and joined together to form fresh ripples that plashed against the keels of the five large boats on which had been laid the temporary bridge that connected the head of the gorge with the old stone gateway of the castle yard. The battlements of the gateway and the

great shield above, bearing the Warnow arms, shone in the evening light, as did the round tower of the castle and the higher roofs and gables, down to the sharply-cut line of the blue shadow thrown by the hill-side over the receding portion of the building. And farther on to the right shone the tops of the trees in the flooded park, and beyond castle and park the still water which filled the whole immense bay, and seemed to flow without interruption towards the open sea. Under the brilliant slanting rays of the sun, the few points of the dunes still above water vanished even from Reinhold's sharp eyes; he could hardly distinguish the roofs of the Pölitz's farm, and here and there on the wide expanse the branches of a willow which formerly stood by the side of a ditch.

The President stood lost in thought; he seemed to have forgotten even Reinhold's presence.

"The day will come," Reinhold heard him murmur.

They crossed the bridge of boats, with the water gurgling and splashing against the sharp keels; through the wide gateway sounded a subdued hum of voices.

Now for the first time as they passed through the gate, they saw why the village

had looked deserted. The immense courtyard was filled, particularly at the end nearest to the castle, with a crowd of nearly a thousand people, standing about in large groups, who as they respectfully made way for the gentlemen advancing to the door, took note of them curiously, and made whispered remarks upon them behind their backs. "The one next to the Captain was the President!" said those who knew him, and they were the majority, to the others. "If the President, who was the principal person in the whole province, and such a good gentleman too, who was sure to act for the best, had come here and was going to be present at the funeral, why then the parson could not possibly stay at home. And if the parson had known that the President would be here, he would never have been ill. He wouldn't get the parsonage at Golm for a long time yet, and if the Count liked to make him his domestic chaplain, why he might please himself; but whether the Count and his chaplain would be any richer than the mice in the chapel at Golm was another question. And if the Count meant to play the master here, they would soon put him out of conceit with that; but Herr Damberg said there was no chance of that; he might think himself fortunate if

he came off with his life, and at any rate his property would be sequestrated!"

The four gentlemen had entered the castle. A more numerous and brilliant group which now appeared on the bridge, attracted the attention of the multitude. It was a party of officers in full uniform, followed at a little distance by a larger number of non-commissioned officers — belonging to Herr von Werben's regiment, said those who had been in the army and who had seen Ottomar in his coffin. "And the Colonel, who came first, he commanded his regiment too, and any one who had served under him in France could see that he knew how to command, by the look of his eyes and nose; and the Captain, who came next to him, was one of the Staff who had been sent here by Field Marshal Moltke himself; and the tall Lieutenant, also in the uniform of Herr von Werben's regiment, was the young Herr von Wartenberg of the Bolswitz Wartenbergs; and as for the old Bolswitz people, they had arrived more than an hour ago in their carriage with three outriders from their place ten miles off. And so how could a word be true of all the nonsense talked about young Herr von Werben, that he had not been taken to Berlin because he would not have had an honourable burial

there, and now here were people coming the whole way from Berlin to assist at his funeral!"

Justus, who had readily undertaken the direction of the simple funeral ceremonies, and who now saw the officers crossing the courtyard, waited in the hall long enough to receive them, and to conduct them into the room on the right hand where the company was assembled. Then he made a sign to Reinhold to follow him, and led him through a door at the end of the hall which he opened cautiously and immediately shut behind him. "No one is allowed to enter now," said he. "What do you say to it, Reinhold?"

The lofty and handsome room had its shutters closed, but was filled with the soft light of innumerable wax candles in chandeliers and branches on the walls, and in candelabra between masses of evergreen plants and young fir-trees, which were beautifully arranged in a semicircle opening towards the entrance to the room, and surrounding the two coffins which stood on a high daïs, carpeted and covered with flowers. The walls around were adorned with old armour which Justus had rescued from the lumber-room, and fine casts from the antique, even some originals collected by a former art-loving

possessor of the castle, and which he had brought together from the various rooms, and also with bouquets of leafy plants and fir-trees, between which lights were burning.

"Have not I made it splendid?" whispered Justus, "and all in these few hours this morning! How they would both have liked it—he the armour, and she the statues! But the most beautiful things here are themselves. I must call the family now, Reinhold, before we close the coffins; do you take your farewell now. You have not had so much opportunity yet as the others."

Justus disappeared through a door which led to the inner apartments; and Reinhold mounted the steps and stood between the coffins, in which they slept the sleep that knows no waking.

Yes, they were beautiful! more beautiful than they had been in life. Death seemed to have purified them from every earthly taint, that their noble natures might show themselves in all their grandeur. How grand, how fine was this maiden's face! how exquisitely sweet the youth's! And as if in dying the union of their souls had been truly accomplished, and each had lovingly given to the other what best adorned them in life, on her lips that had been so proudly closed was

a tender, happy, humble smile, while from his delicate pure features death had wiped away with the restless glance of the nervous eyes and the impatient quiver of the delicate mouth, all that was imperfect and unfinished, and left nothing but the expression of heroic determination with which he had gone to his death, and to which a solemn seal was set by the broad red scar on the white forehead. There was a slight rustle in the leaves behind him; he turned and opened his arms to Elsa. She leant against him weeping: "Only for a moment," she whispered, "that I may feel your dear heart beat, and know that I have you living still, my comfort, my help!" She raised herself again. "Farewell, farewell! For the last time, farewell, my dear, dear brother! Farewell, my beautiful, proud sister, whom I should have loved so dearly!"

She kissed them both on their pale lips; then Reinhold took her in his arms and led her down from the side of the daïs, where he saw Justus and Meta standing hand in hand a little way off between the shrubs, while from the back appeared upon the daïs the General, Valerie, and Sidonie, Uncle Ernst and Aunt Rikchen, to take leave of the dead. It was a solemn yet exciting moment, the details of which Reinhold's tear-filled eyes

could not seize or retain, while to Justus's keen artist's eye one touching and beautiful picture followed another—none more touching or beautiful to him, who knew these people and their circumstances so well, than the last which he saw: the General with tender care almost carrying down the steps of the daïs the utterly exhausted Valerie—she had only left her sick-room for this moment, and had covered her head with a thick lace veil—while Uncle Ernst's powerful figure, still standing above, bent down to good little Aunt Rikchen, and he passed his strong large hand soothingly over her pale, sorrowful, tear-stained cheek.

"Do you know," whispered Meta, "they are feeling now just what we did when he stood by our sleeping angel, that they must love one another very much now, you know."

Half an hour later the funeral procession moved from the gateway, from whose battlements floated in the soft evening breeze on one side the German flag, on the other a black flag, and passed over the bridge of boats, up the gully, and from there turning to the right, entered the gradually ascending road to the churchyard, which lay on the highest of the hills that had now become the shore,

a few hundred paces from the village. It was a long, solemn procession.

First came village children, strewing with fir branches the sandy road before the coffins, the one adorned with palms, in which lay hidden the virgin form of the beautiful and heroic maiden, carried by sturdy pilots and fishermen from Wissow, who insisted upon bearing their Captain's cousin to her last resting-place; and the other with the war-like emblems of the man for whom she had died, and whom a merciful fate had permitted to die the death of a brave man, worthy of the decorations he had won in presence of the enemy, and which the sergeant of his troop carried behind him on a silk cushion, worthy that the gallant soldiers who had known him in his brightest days, whose shoulders his kindly hand had so often rested on in the heat of battle, by the blazing camp-fire, on the weary march, should carry him now on his way to answer to the great roll-call.

Behind the coffins came the two fathers, then Reinhold leading his Elsa, Justus with his Meta,—Sidonie and Aunt Rikchen had remained with Valerie,—the President and Colonel von Bohl, Schönau and the brilliant company of other officers, the neighbouring gentry with their wives, Herr and Frau von

Strummin, the Wartenbergs, the Griebens, the Boltenhagens and Warnekows, and all the rest of the descendants of the old, long-established families; the innumerable following of landsmen and sailors, the gigantic form of the worthy Pölitz, and the stalwart figure of the head pilot, Bonsak, at their head.

A long, solemn, silent procession, accompanied step by step by the monotonous sound of the tide washing against the steep banks, and now and then the shrill cry of a gull, as skimming over the dazzling water, it seemed curiously to watch the strange sight, or a whispered word from some man to his neighbour, that even those nearest before or behind could not hear.

Such was the word that the General spoke to Uncle Ernst, as the head of the procession reached the graveyard, "Do you feel strong enough?" and that which Uncle Ernst answered, "Now for the first time I feel myself strong again."

But even Reinhold and Elsa, who walked behind them, would not have understood it if they had heard. Uncle Ernst had not shown to any one yet, excepting the General, the telegram of which Justus had spoken, the fateful message, in the dry hard style of a police official.

"Philip Schmidt, on the point of embarking to-night on board steamer 'Hansa,' from Bremerhaven to Chili, recognised, and shot himself with a revolver in his cabin; misappropriated money recovered untouched; will be buried to-morrow evening at six o'clock."

Under the broad hand which he had thrust into his overcoat lay the paper, and against it beat his mighty heart, beat in truth stronger and with revived pride, now that he might say to himself that his unhappy son was not at least one of the cowards who prized life above all things; that even for him there had been a measure of infamy which could not be overpassed, since at that moment he had spilt the cup of life—a draught too insipid and miserable for even his dishonoured lips.

The coffins had been let down into their common grave. At the head of the grave stood Uncle Ernst bareheaded, and bareheaded stood the crowd in a wide semicircle around him.

Bareheaded, silent, looking up to the stately man whose figure stood out giant-like from the hill-side in the rosy evening light.

And now he lifted his great eyes, which seemed to embrace the whole assembly in one glance, and now he raised his deep voice,

whose bell-like tones carried every word distinctly to the extreme edge of the circle:

"My friends all! I may call you so, for in the presence of a great sorrow all men are friends, and in this lies the healing and saving power of a tragic fate, and also its necessity. As my shadow falls here upon you, so does every one stand between other men and the sun of fortune, and each envies the other his portion, which should, he thinks, belong to him; and he forgets that it is only an outward show that he so eagerly desires, a glittering show without warmth, and that the warmth which he should indeed desire dwells in the heart of every man, and is that alone which makes life worth having, or even possible. Woe to us poor human creatures, that we forget this for long, loveless years, forget the sublime words that love is above all, and drown the pleadings of the heart that longs for love with the hollow tinkle of our meagre knowledge and our paltry wisdom! Woe to the individual, and woe to the nation!

"Woe to the nation that forgets it, and exists for generations and centuries in crass selfishness and blind hatred, till the hereditary foe breaks into its fields, and, waking the people from their dull dreams, reminds them at length that they are brothers; and as brothers they

stand by one another, as we have done on innumerable battle-fields in the most glorious and most righteous of all wars, only on returning home to begin anew the struggle over mine and thine—the wild, desolating struggle of self-advancement, that feels no shame and knows no mercy, desires no peace and gives no pardon, and respects no right but that of the victor, who scornfully tramples the conquered under foot. Oh, my friends! we have experienced this! These last years will remain noted as the most shameful, following immediately upon the most glorious in our history—a melancholy memorial and sign how low a great nation can sink.

"But our great German nation cannot, will not sink deeper.

"Let us, my friends, take this fearful storm with its desolating horrors, which have now exhausted themselves and upon which this sublime peace has come down from heaven, as a token that the storm which is now raging through German society will sweep away the poisonous vapours of self-love, and make the glorious German sun shine brighter than before; that the barren waters which now cover so many acres of young green grass will pass away, and offer a new land for fresh honest labour and honest golden fruits.

"May this hope and this assurance soften the grief for the beloved dead whom we now commit to the sacred bosom of the earth—this hope, this assurance, and the certainty that they have not died in vain; that they were blossoms struck down by the storm to warn the gardener that he must tend and cherish the noble tree more carefully.

"The call comes thus to us the elders and old men. As they died gladly and joyfully, without asking whether they might not still live, hastening to death as to a feast, so must we live without asking whether we had not rather die.

"The call comes thus to you who are younger, to you all the louder and more urgently, the longer the road stretches before you, the more powerful are the obstacles that rise in your path.

"Oh! thou bright star of day, whose last ray now shines upon us, and thou holy sea, and thou reviving earth, I take you all to witness the vow which we make at the grave of these too early dead: to renounce from this hour all littleness and meanness, to live henceforth in the light of truth, to love each other with the whole strength of our hearts! May the God of truth and love overrule all to the

honour of man, and the glory of the German name!"

The voice of the speaker died away, but the echo of his words reverberated in the hearts of the hearers as they pressed silently round to offer the last honours to the dead, bathed in the reflection of the rosy glow which the sun, now set, threw up to the sky, and which the sky lovingly returned to the earth.

THE END.

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